NINTENDO POWER®

Kirby Mass Attack & Kirby's Return to Dream Land • Star Fox 64 3D • Resident Evil: Revelations • Professor Layton and the Last Specter • Tetris • Solatorobo

271

SEPTEMBER 2011

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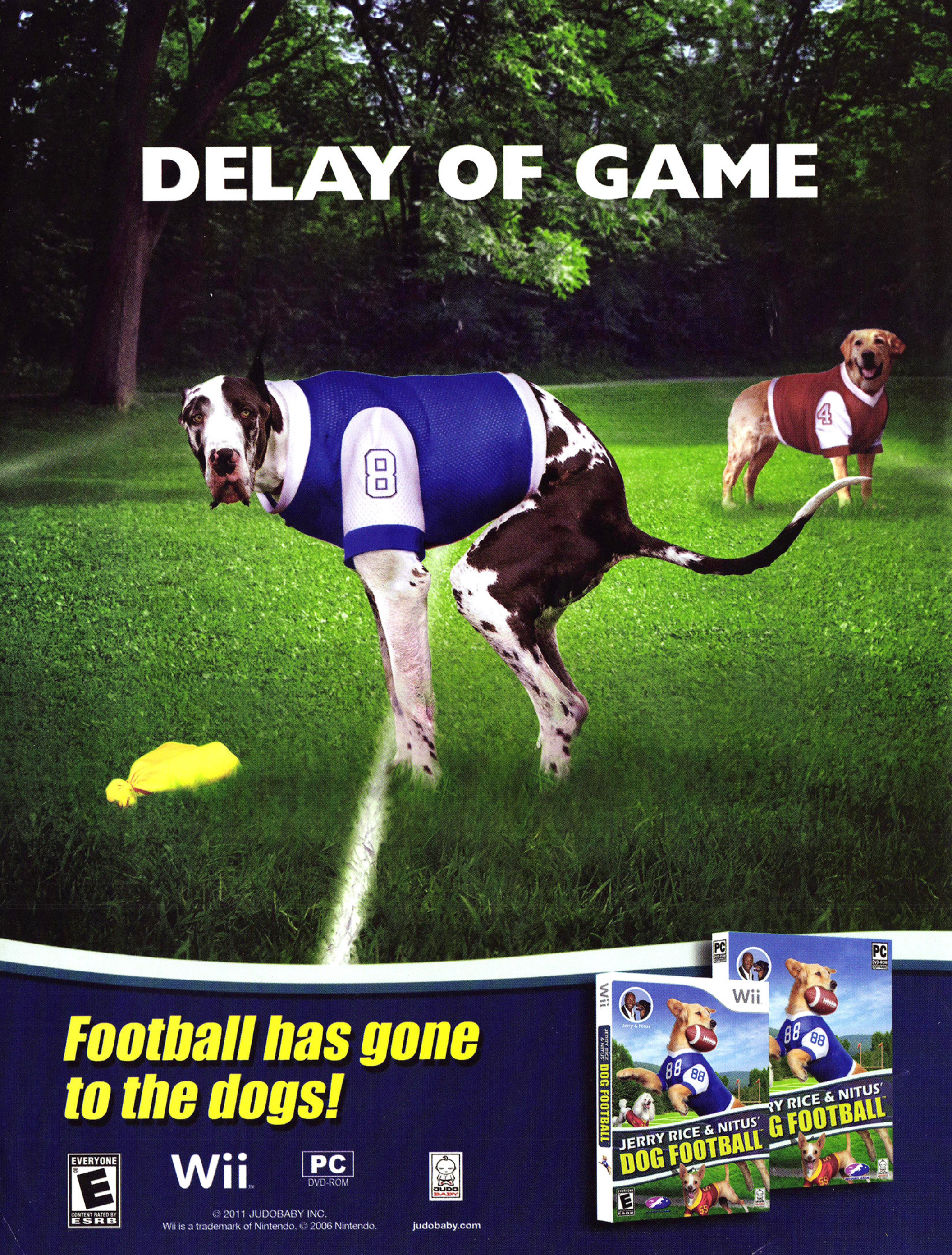
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8
4
Football has gone to the dogs!
EVERYONE
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Nintendo's pink puffball is back in Kirby's Return to Dream Land for Wii, featuring classic Kirby action, four-player gameplay, and the ability to hug. What more could you ask for?

The Nintendo 64 Age of Innovation 48

The beloved Nintendo 64 console is celebrating its 15th birthday, and we're taking the opportunity to look back at the way this system changed the face of gaming.

Fear Runs Cold 56

If you're seeking bone-chilling terror, look no further than Resident Evil: Revelations for the Nintendo 3DS. We've got more new screenshots and gameplay details than you can throw a zombie at.

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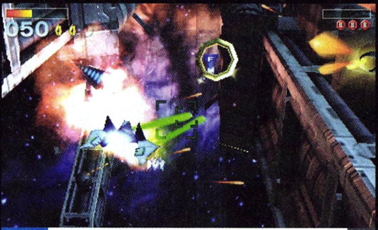

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DS = NINTENDO DS
DW = DSiWARE
N3DS = NINTENDO 3DS
NES = NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM
VC = VIRTUAL CONSOLE
Wii = Wii
WW = WiiWARE

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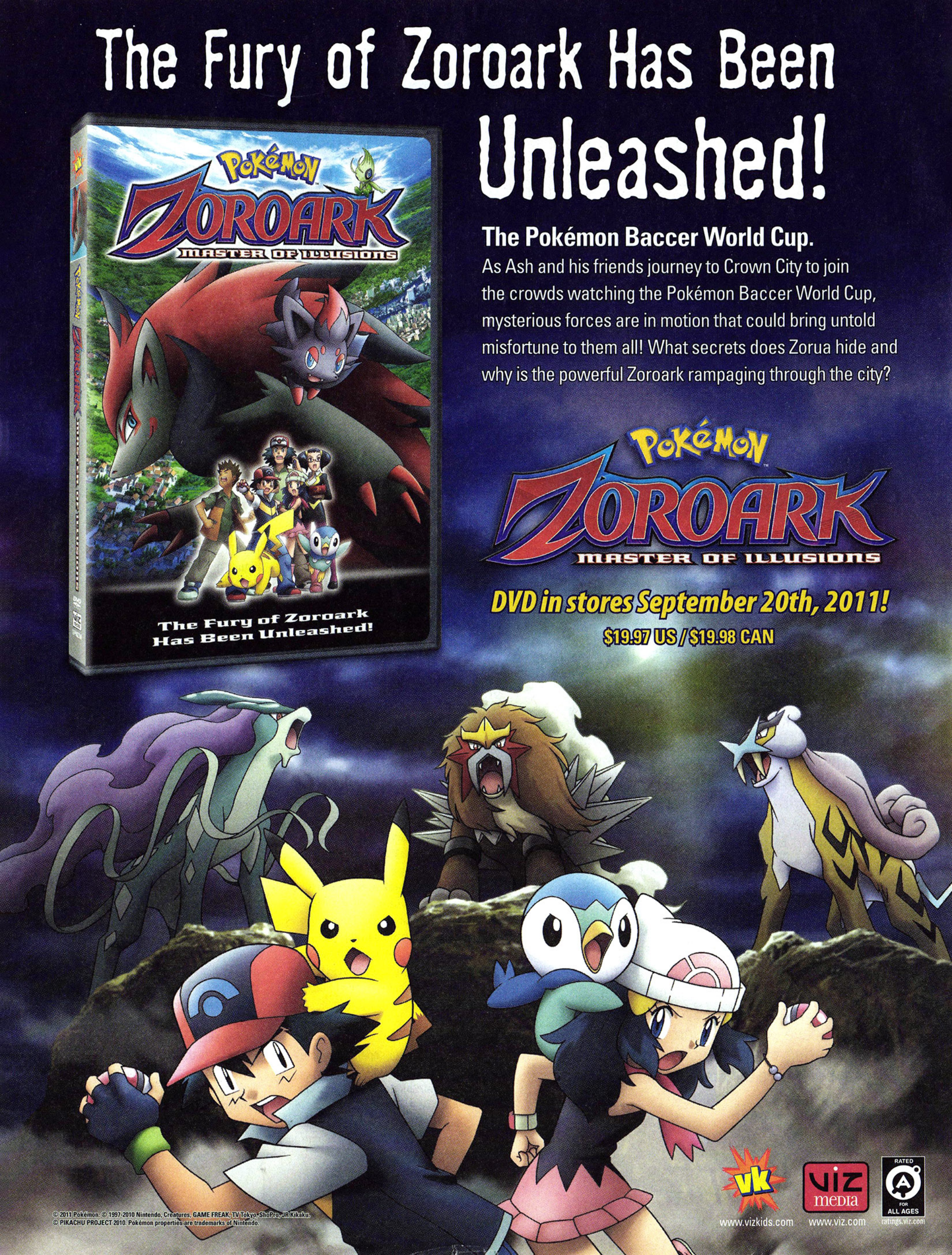
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Zoroark
Master of Illusions
The Fury of Zoroark Has Been Unleashed!

The Fury of Zoroark Has Been Unleashed!

The Pokémon Baccer World Cup.

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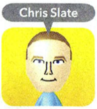
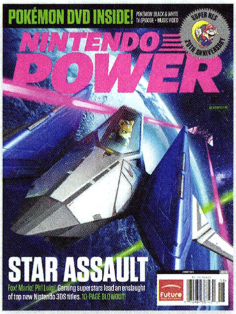


Two years ago, when we featured New Super Mario Bros. Wii on the cover of Vol. 248, I used this space to talk about how fun it was to still play multiplayer games in person at a time when online gaming was more popular than it had ever been. Now I'm even more convinced that sharing a couch with other players is better in many ways, and I'm also certain that this style of play will have a key role in the future of video games. I'm not knocking online gaming—it's a different experience that has some advantages over traditional multiplayer. But one look at the E3 demos for next year's Wii U console makes it clear that there is a lot more gaming fun to be had with friends in the living room. In the meantime, we're getting another multiplayer milestone with Kirby's Return to Dream Land for the Wii system, which follows in the hallowed four-player footsteps of modern classics like New Super Mario Bros. Wii and Super Smash Bros. Brawl. And while we're on the subject of multiplayer gaming, let's take a minute to recognize the impact that the Nintendo 64 console made 15 years ago with its revolutionary four controller ports and standard-setting four-player experiences such as GoldenEye 007. Nintendo systems have always found exciting new ways to bring friends together, and I can't wait to see where they take us next.

CHRIS SLATE **EDITOR IN CHIEF**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POKÉMON BLACK & WHITE TV EPISODE + MUSIC VIDEO
SUPER NES 20TH ANNIVERSARY
NINTENDO POWER
STAR ASSAULT
Fox! Mario! Pit! Luigi! Gaming superstars lead an onslaught of top new Nintendo 3DS titles. 10-PAGE BLOWOUT!
Future

V270 AUGUST 2011

Chris Slate here, back once again to answer your letters while inhaling bad guys. But first, this month's special letter request: if the big Nintendo 3DS price drop and holiday-season game lineup of Super Mario 3D Land and Mario Kart 7 haven't convinced you to buy a system, what are you holding out for? Send your responses to the address on page 6, and we'll print the best ones!

LETTERS

How Do You Like Your Hyrule?

I am not someone who loves a game simply for its graphics, but I think that The Legend of Zelda: Twilight Princess used its advanced visuals to immerse the player like never before. But here we are five years later, and the graphics in The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword seem to take a step backward to the days of Ocarina of Time—a strange thing for a series that has always shaken up the gaming universe. —**GRAYSON A.**

We get letters like yours all the time, but the funny thing is that everyone has a different opinion on what the series's best graphical style is. While I personally loved the look of Twilight Princess, I do think that the world sometimes seemed a little too generic-fantasy. I can't choose a favorite between the cartoony and more-realistic Zelda styles, but Skyward Sword could prove to be the perfect a mix of both.

More Carnage!

Although your superhero-games feature in Vol. 269 included Venom/Spider-Man: Separation Anxiety, its *awesome* predecessor, Spider-Man and Venom: Maximum Carnage, wasn't in there! Come on, guys! —**CAM M.**

There Is a Plan

I was really excited to see a lot of Zelda articles in the last issue. I was especially psyched to see an interview with Eiji Aonuma, but one of the questions there piqued my curiosity: "Where does Skyward Sword fall in the timeline?" So, I was wondering, is there an official timeline for the series? —**BREAH D.**

This question has been asked a lot, but we're addressing it again because Mr. Aonuma has recently confirmed that there is an unofficial Zelda timeline that his team refers to. However, in order to retain the freedom to insert future adventures wherever they'd like, there are no plans to release the timeline to the public.

Viva VC

Virtual Console deserves more credit. It helped me get into a lot of game franchises, such as Final Fantasy, Mega Man, Metroid, Sonic the Hedgehog, Donkey Kong Country, and Kid Icarus, and I've learned just how great the 8- and 16-bit eras were. (And how skilled players had to be back then, especially when trying to take on Milon's Secret Castle.) So, I want to thank Nintendo for reviving retro games for people like me who weren't around back in the old days. Here's hoping that the Virtual Console offerings on Nintendo 3DS will continue to expand. —**YASSIR HEESMYBABY**

Thanks so much for your article on the 20th anniversary of the Super NES. As a child of the N64 era, I hadn't heard of many of these games and have since started to check them out on Virtual Console. (ActRaiser is *sooo* awesome!) This is what I love most about Nintendo gaming: its long history of amazing titles that never go out of style. **—JABBERJAY12**

STILL SUPER AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

READY FOR LAUNCH

Super Mario World

Gradius III

SimCity

Belated Birthday

I know you guys were preoccupied with celebrating the anniversaries of The Legend Zelda and the Super NES, but couldn't you fit in a party for ol' Sammy? I know the US release of Metroid wasn't until 1987, but that doesn't change the fact that the franchise has been around for 25 years! Don't you know it's very rude to forget a girl's birthday? **—BLAINE H.**

As you touched on, Metroid doesn't turn 25 in the US until next year, and we usually go by US release dates when observing anniversaries. We bent the rules for our coverage of The Legend of Zelda because Nintendo chose 2011 for its official worldwide celebration—it would have been too confusing for us to throw another party a year later.

Disrespecting DK

It's good that Nintendo is celebrating the 25th anniversary of The Legend of Zelda, but Donkey Kong is turning 30 this year and no one's said anything! Please spread the word! **—NINTENDUDE**

We agree that Donkey Kong deserves some special appreciation, which is why we chose to feature the big ape in this month's Star Power section. Be sure to swing by and say hello!

Mega Man Prime

Mega Man has gotten a lot of attention as far as retro reboots go, but I would love to see a first-person Mega Man 2 shooter that played like Metroid Prime, with bosses that are a little more realistic. **—DUST MAN**

Send Your Pics!

Could put in a page devoted to fans' AR pictures? It would be awesome! **—GABRIEL S.**

Hey, great minds think alike! We're starting a regular column called Photo Challenge in this month's Community section. If you've taken some cool pics with your Nintendo DSi or Nintendo 3DS handheld, send 'em in!

Tanooki Twins?

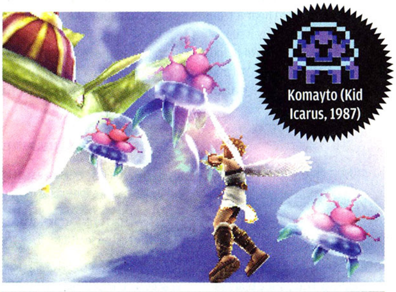
Is Mario's Tanooki suit really a Tom Nook-ie suit? Because Mario looks a bit like ol' Tom Nook from Animal Crossing when he wears it.
—THE MEGA OOMBLOID

Mario's Tanooki suit appeared 13 years before Tom Nook, but both are based on the Japanese "raccoon dog," the *Tanuki*.

Metroid Mashup

While reading the Kid Icarus: Uprising entry in last month's "Nintendo's Next Wave" feature, I noticed that in one of the screenshots Pit is fighting enemies that look a lot like Metroids. Is this an homage to the Metroid series or just a coincidence? **—LILKEYBLADER666**

It's no coincidence, but the creatures in Kid Icarus aren't officially Metroids, either. The crossover came about because the original NES Kid Icarus had the same developers as the first Metroid, which was created at the same time. The Kid Icarus manual calls the creature Komayto, and describes it as "A mysterious floating creature" that probably "came from a planet other than Earth."



Familiar alien life forms invade Kid Icarus: Uprising for N3DS.

DON'T HASSLE THE HOFF

Hello, Mr. Hoff. I'd like to show my appreciation for your service to loyal Nintendo Power readers with this gift:

I was also hoping you would give us your thoughts on

1. Professor Layton vs. Phoenix Wright
2. Driving through Waluigi's pinball track
3. Seeing yourself all rainbowy while racing

—AUSTIN B.

The Hoff says: Thanks, Austin! Getting immortalized in crafts was #148 on my to-do list this month, and I never thought I'd get around to it. Sadly, I have space to say only that if you notice yourself turning rainbowy, it is not normal. In fact, it's probably caused by expired deodorant. Discontinue use and take a shower immediately.

New games on the way for the Paper Mario, Luigi's Mansion, Mario Kart, Super Mario, and Legend of Zelda series, plus the Wii U console coming up next year—who wouldn't be excited about all of *that*? **—DEDE**

What did you think of Nintendo's showing at E3?

I watched Nintendo's entire E3 press conference streaming live and was excited for all 70 minutes of it. Wii U looks awesome, and I think Pikmin will be a great fit for it. The new Animal Crossing looks awesome, Fortune Street and Mario Party 9 both look sweet, and the Rhythm Heaven and Kirby games made my day when I saw them (not to mention Luigi's Mansion 2). **—THE DOCTOR**

I think I died when Nintendo's event started with a live orchestra playing Zelda tunes while a Zelda montage played on the screen, and I loved all the announcements about the series's silver anniversary. As for the unveiling of Wii U: I love the new controller and the fact that the console incorporates the Wii (I love that little system), and I'm excited for more details to emerge. **—VILE MALMORT**

I really like the possibilities of the Wii U console's new features and its technical power. Nintendo also seems to be doing things right by bringing in third-party Western developers. However, I noticed there wasn't a huge set of third-party Japanese games announced. Here's hoping some will be shown when more info on the system comes out. As far as the Wii is concerned, this year is looking very lackluster except for Kirby and Zelda. The system needs more new games. **—ZAKI H.**

I watched the live stream of Nintendo's E3 conference on my computer, and was very pleased with what I saw. The Wii U system, new Super Smash Bros. games for Wii U and Nintendo 3DS, and Luigi's Mansion 2—where do I sign up?! And being a proud Nintendo 3DS owner, I can't wait for Super Mario 3D Land. Overall, Nintendo's been kicking butt and chewing bubble gum when it comes to E3 and everything else! *Nintendo forever*! **—GARRETT MCD.**

I am a dedicated Nintendo Power subscriber, but because of the recent mail strike in Canada, I had to wait longer than usual to get my copy of Vol. 269. And the worst part is, it was the E3 edition! And it was the issue where the Wii U was explained! While I was waiting, I wouldn't let any of my friends tell me about anything shown at E3 because I wanted to hear it from NP first. I finally got my issue, and I'm stoked for the Wii U and all of the new games for Wii and Nintendo 3DS! **—SUPER_SONIC**

I thought Nintendo's E3 showing was awesome! The Wii U controller looks like the perfect mix between a home console and a handheld system, and there already appear to be a lot of innovative ideas built upon things such as the controller's gyroscope and touch screen. And the games that were announced for the Nintendo 3DS really make me wish I had one. **—SPENCER W.**

I was overjoyed when I found out about the new Luigi's Mansion game! Add the Wii U reveal, and you've got one of the most exciting E3 shows ever! **—PONKOOL4**

I thought Nintendo's showing at E3 was spectacular. My personal favorite part was the Legend of Zelda anniversary presentation—the full-blown orchestra and video retrospective were all that a Zelda fanboy like me could ask for. By the way, did you know that the music in the Skyward Sword trailer is actually Zelda's Lullaby played backwards? **—THE UMANOID**

PLEASE WRITE US

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Understand that the magazine staff is separate from Nintendo; we don't make the games.

Don't send links to game coverage on the Web—trust us; we see it all.

Don't ask about the status of upcoming games, or whether certain games will be announced; if we have that info, we'll always tell you.

NINTENDO POWER

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What Nintendo fans think, want, and do

The SCORE

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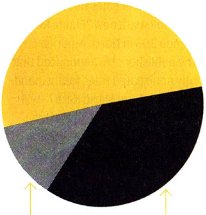
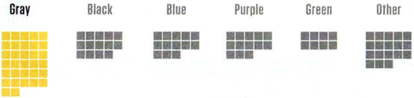


WHICH COLOR WAS YOUR PRIMARY N64 CONTROLLER?



I FIRST PLAYED THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: OCARINA OF TIME ON

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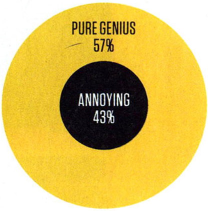

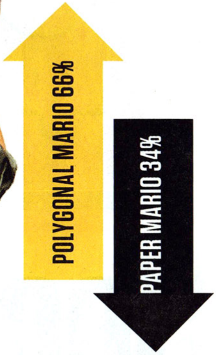

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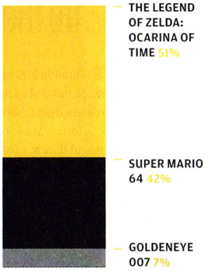

NINTENDO 3DS
3D
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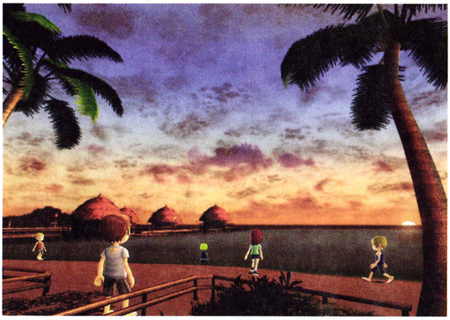
Second Coming

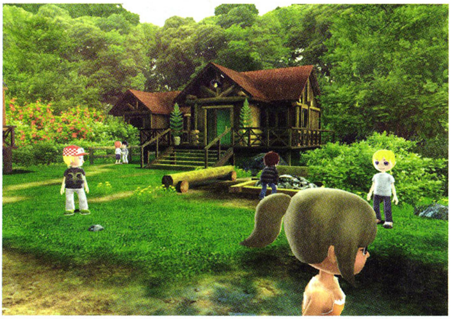
Nintendo looks to give the **Nintendo 3DS** a boost heading into the critical holiday season.

WITH SALES OF the Nintendo 3DS handheld lagging behind expectations, Nintendo has decided to drop the price of the hardware from $249.99 to $169.99. Nintendo president Satoru Iwata acknowledged the magnitude of the cut during a recent investor briefing. In explaining one of the reasons behind the move, he stated, "We thought that eliminating the concerns of future hardware expansion early on would make a great difference to how retailers and software publishers will allocate their energies.... Software publishers are currently reviewing which development teams will work on which projects, the results of which shall be launched next year and beyond. Removing their concerns on the sales of the Nintendo 3DS hardware will be very critical for us to be able to enrich the applicable software in the years to come. In fact, immediately after our announcement...Nintendo employees started to receive feedback from retailers and software publishers around the world, and this feedback is, in general, rather positive." Those who purchased a Nintendo 3DS and connected to the Nintendo eShop before the price drop took effect on August 12th will be able to download 10 NES and 10 Game Boy Advance titles free of charge (see page 20 for more information).

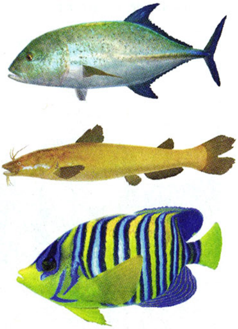
In a further effort to bolster sales this holiday season, Nintendo will release a new "Flame Red" version of the Nintendo 3DS in North America on September 9th. The publisher also announced that two of its most hotly anticipated titles for the handheld—Super Mario 3D Land and Mario Kart 7—will arrive in November and December, respectively.

Finally, Iwata made one other interesting note regarding Nintendo's future plans, stating that the company is "preparing a system for micro-transactions and so-called add-on content for both the Nintendo 3DS and the Wii U, and for the Nintendo 3DS we are targeting to release something this calendar year." **—STEVE T.**





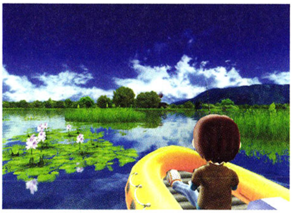
The Life Aquatic

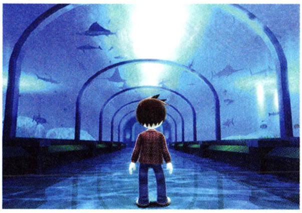


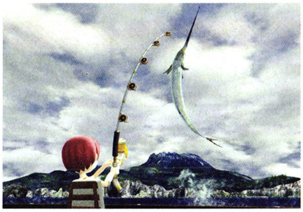
The co-creator of Sonic the Hedgehog tries to hook players on something a bit more relaxing with **Fishing Resort.**

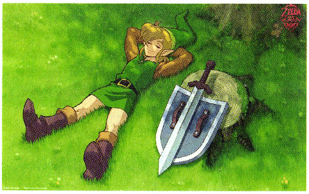
YUJI NAKA'S gone fishin'. The latest project from the legendary developer's Prope studio is Fishing Resort, and it's coming to North American Wii consoles this fall courtesy of XSEED. As per its moniker, the game is as much about the resort as it is the fishing, with light RPG elements that encourage you to explore your tropical surroundings. Your fellow vacationers will ask you to help them with various tasks, and a bulletin board offers all sorts of daily activities and contests.

As for the fishing itself, the resort offers nearly every kind of opportunity you can imagine. You can rent a kayak to find a hidden cove, charter a boat for some deep-sea fishing, or even scale the local mountain to go ice fishing. There are more than 200 varieties of sea life in all, and each has been painstakingly rendered with authentic detail. In fact, a lot more care seems to be going into Fishing Resort's visuals than you'd expect from a game of its ilk. It also offers multiplayer competitions for up to four anglers, as well as an online leaderboard. The last Prope title that XSEED published—Ivy the Kiwi?—was a hidden gem, so let's hope the same proves true with this one. **—STEVE T.**









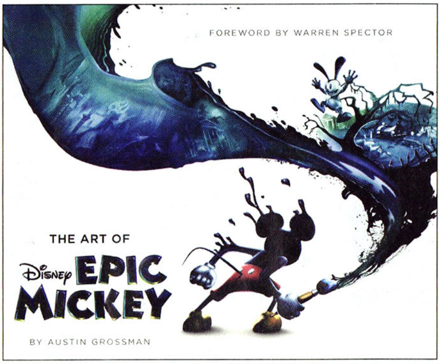
Anniversary Presents

This year marks the 25th anniversary of The Legend of Zelda, and Nintendo plans to celebrate the occasion with a number of initiatives. As previously announced, that includes a symphony featuring music from throughout the series. We can now report that the symphony's first tour stop will be in Los Angeles on October 21st, followed by London on October 25th. Additional dates will be announced soon on www.zelda-symphony.com. In the meantime, those of you who live elsewhere can participate in a Zelda flipnote contest, download some gorgeous 25th anniversary wallpapers (including the one shown to the left), and learn all about the franchise's history at zelda.nintendo.com.

Epic Art Book

The twisted beauty of **Epic Mickey** goes from the video screen to the printed page.

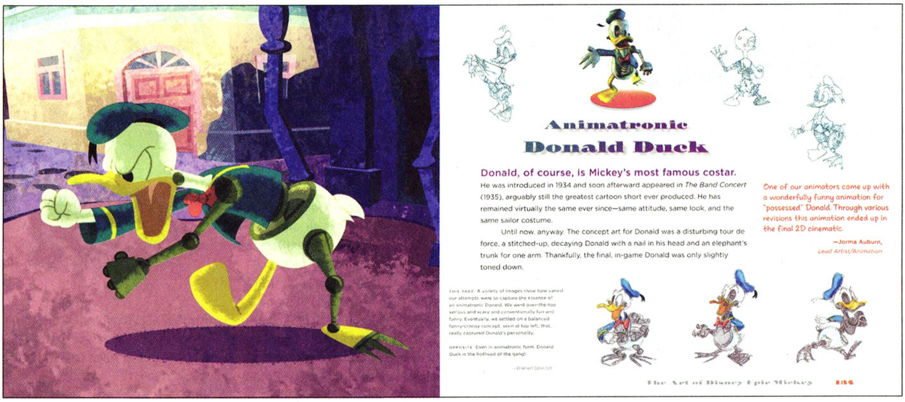
DISNEY PRESS is commemorating one of last year's most visually creative video games with *The Art of Disney Epic Mickey*, a 160-page hardcover coffee-table book. The impressive volume includes sketches, concept art, final frames, and stills from the game, all accompanied by commentary from creative director Warren Spector and other members of the development team. The lead author of the book is Epic Mickey cowriter Austin Grossman. *The Art of Disney Epic Mickey* goes on sale September 6th for a suggested retail price of about 40 bucks. —**STEVE T.**



FOREWORD BY WARREN SPECTOR

THE ART OF
Disney EPIC
MICKEY

BY AUSTIN GROSSMAN



Animatronic
Donald Duck

Donald, of course, is Mickey's most famous costar.

He was introduced in 1934 and soon afterward appeared in *The Band Concert* (1935), arguably still the greatest cartoon short ever produced. He has remained virtually the same ever since—same attitude, same look, and the same sailor costume.

Until now, anyway. The concept art for Donald was a disturbing tour de force, a stitched-up, decaying Donald with a nail in his head and an elephant's trunk for one arm. Thankfully, the final, in-game Donald was only slightly toned down.

One of our animators came up with a wonderfully funny animation for "possessed" Donald. Through various revisions this animation ended up in the final 2D cinematic.

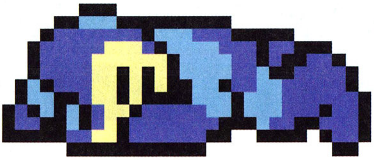
—Jorma Auburn,
Lead Artist/Animation

THIS PAGE: A variety of images show how varied our attempts were to capture the essence of an animatronic Donald. We went over-the-top serious and scary and conventionally fun and funny. Eventually, we settled on a balanced funny/creepy concept, seen at top left, that really captured Donald's personality.

OPPOSITE: Even in animatronic form, Donald Duck is the hothead of the gang!

—Warren Spector

The Art of Disney Epic Mickey [illegible]

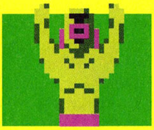


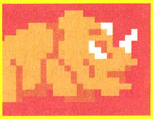
Death of a Legend

In what might be the worst news ever for Mega Man enthusiasts, Capcom has announced that Mega Man Legends 3 for the Nintendo 3DS has been canceled. Neither the downloadable Prototype Version nor the retail version of the game—which was to have included fan-generated content—will be released. In similar news, Ubisoft's Assassin's Creed: Lost Legacy for N3DS has been scrapped as well.

A WINNER IS...

Both Nintendo 3DS early adopters *and* latecomers.



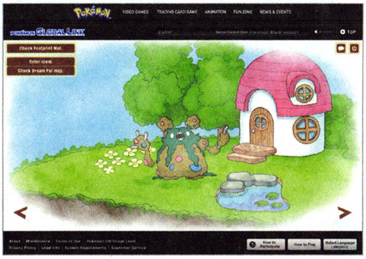


DODONGO DISLIKES...

Getting players to make your game...and then canceling it.

Going Global

Experience a new side of Pokémon Black and Pokémon White Versions with the **Pokémon Global Link**.



AS MANY POKÉMON fans have already discovered, the Pokémon Global Link (www.pokemon.com/pgl) offers many new experiences to players of Pokémon Black and Pokémon White Versions. To find out more about the website's current and future offerings, we chatted with Andy Hartpence, Online Marketing Director at The Pokémon Company International.

NINTENDO POWER Generally speaking, what is the Pokémon Global Link?

ANDY HARTPENCE The Pokémon Global Link is an online extension of the Pokémon Black Version and Pokémon White Version video games. Pokémon Trainers can experience the dreams of their Pokémon in the Pokémon Dream World, or see how they stack up against other Pokémon Trainers across the world in the Global Battle Union. It's all about connectivity.

What do players need to do to start using the PGL? Can you use the PGL if you don't own Pokémon Black or Pokémon White Version?

Even if you don't own the game yet, you can check out the Global Battle Union and Pokémon Dream World by using the Demo Version of the site (all you need is an internet connection and a Pokémon Trainer Club account, available for free at Pokemon.com). There is a lot to explore if you're playing the Demo Version of the Pokémon Global Link, but to maximize the fun and benefits of the website you should use Game Sync to connect your Pokémon Trainer Club account to either Pokémon Black Version, Pokémon White Version, or both games.

Once your video game is synced with your Pokémon Trainer Club account on the PGL website, you can transfer items and Pokémon from the Pokémon Dream World to your video game, track your Gym Badges on your profile page, see how your battle skills compare against other Pokémon Trainers from around the world, and quite a lot more.

What exactly is the Pokémon Dream World, and what kinds of things can users do there?

The Pokémon Dream World allows you to experience the dreams of sleeping Pokémon. You "tuck in" the Pokémon you want to fall asleep in your video game, then after performing a Game Sync, your Pokémon will appear in the Pokémon Dream World on your computer.

In the Pokémon Dream World, you can befriend Pokémon by playing minigames and growing Berries. You can also swap items with other sleeping Pokémon, explore different landscapes, and decorate your own special home. The best part about the Pokémon Dream World is that your Pokémon will bring the other Pokémon, Berries, and items you collect in the Pokémon Dream World back to your video game when it wakes up. Since you can befriend Pokémon from regions other than Unova, it's a great way to add Pokémon to your collection that would otherwise be difficult to catch.

The Pokémon Dream World features a unique art style as well, so it's fun to see how your favorite Pokémon look when they're in the Pokémon Dream World. My personal favorite is Garbodor!

What does the Global Battle Union have to offer?

The Global Battle Union allows you to rub elbows with some of the best Pokémon Trainers in the world. When you play Random Matchup Rating Mode in either Pokémon Black Version or Pokémon White Version, your battles will affect your placement on the GBU Rankings.

The GBU Rankings are broken down into seasons, with a new season kicking off every three months. After a season wraps up, the final battle results are calculated for Trainers who participated in at least 10 battles during the season. The top 100 Pokémon Trainers in each season's Overall Ranking are rewarded with a special trophy avatar to use on the Pokémon Global Link.

Also, we'll be hosting special tournaments on the Global Battle Union so keep your eyes peeled for upcoming events!

What are your hopes for the PGL?

My hope is that everyone who plays Pokémon Black Version or Pokémon White Version takes the time to visit the Pokémon Global Link at least once. The PGL truly is an extension of the video game, and I want all Pokémon Trainers to experience the Pokémon Dream World and take advantage of the features it has to offer.

I also want players to know that the more active they are in the Pokémon Dream World, the more content they will unlock. Rack up those Dream Points and see what happens!

Can we expect to see the PGL grow in the future?

I will answer with an emphatic *yes*! There are a lot of big plans in the works for the Pokémon Global Link. We have some exciting promotions coming up to distribute Pokémon and customized C-Gear skins through Pokémon Global Link, and there are many more surprises on the way.

Do you have any tips to help users make the most of the PGL?

The best way to maximize your haul in the Pokémon Dream World is to visit regularly. You'll earn Dream Points by being active, and more Dream Points result in more areas to explore and more rows in your garden. More rows in your garden means more Berries, and more Berries means more Décor items you can use to redecorate your house. It's all connected in a great way.

A lot of Pokémon Trainers may not know this, but the Pokémon you befriend in the Pokémon Dream World may have Hidden Abilities that are different than what they'd normally have. Sometimes these Hidden Abilities offer great advantages in battle!

Finally, why should every Pokémon fan be sure to utilize the Pokémon Global Link?

For me, there's just something satisfying about seeing your Pokémon drift to sleep on the Nintendo DS, and then watching it appear in its dream in the Pokémon Dream World. The first time I did this, I used Reshiram. Seeing my Reshiram appear in the Pokémon Dream World was just so quirky and fun—you have to experience it for yourself.

Beyond that simple pleasure, there are practical advantages for Pokémon Trainers that the Pokémon Global Link offers. The ability to grow Berries which are not as common in Pokémon Black Version and Pokémon White Version is a major perk. Combined with the ability to befriend Pokémon from outside Unova, the Pokémon Dream World really has a lot to offer.

Finally, if you're good enough—which I'm not—you could see yourself at the top of the Global Battle Union Rankings. What could be cooler than that?

GET A CROAGUNK **C-GEAR CUSTOM SKIN!** *

PASSWORD: NPCGEAR

* Visit this webpage for further instructions: http://pglhelp.pokemon.com/en/02_01/

STAR POWER

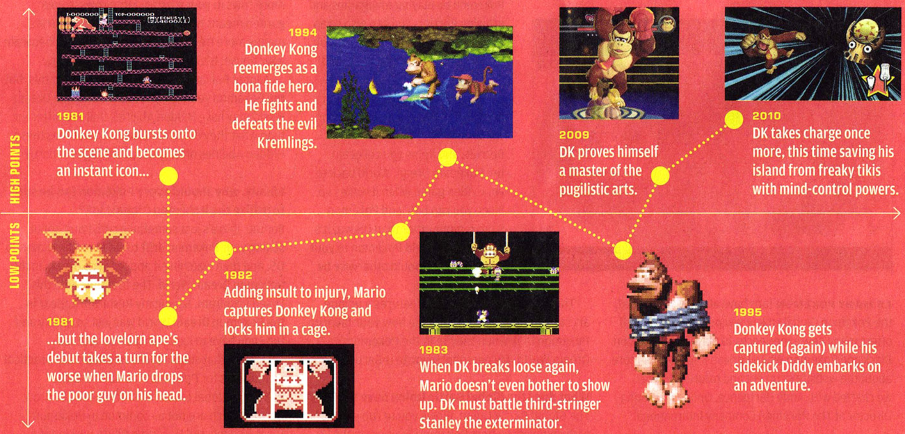
A closer look at the characters we love

FIRST APPEARANCE:
DONKEY KONG
ARCADE, 1981

Donkey Kong

Whether hero or villain, this simian supreme is one of gaming's undisputed all-time greats.

CAREER GRAPH



1981
Donkey Kong bursts onto the scene and becomes an instant icon...

1981
...but the lovelorn ape's debut takes a turn for the worse when Mario drops the poor guy on his head.

1982
Adding insult to injury, Mario captures Donkey Kong and locks him in a cage.

1983
When DK breaks loose again, Mario doesn't even bother to show up. DK must battle third-stringer Stanley the exterminator.

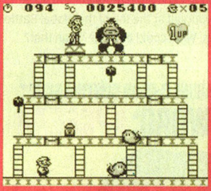
1994
Donkey Kong reemerges as a bona fide hero. He fights and defeats the evil Kremlings.

1995
Donkey Kong gets captured (again) while his sidekick Diddy embarks on an adventure.

2009
DK proves himself a master of the pugilistic arts.

2010
DK takes charge once more, this time saving his island from freaky tikis with mind-control powers.

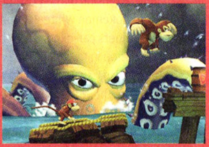
OUR FAVORITE DONKEY KONG GAMES



Donkey Kong
GAME BOY, 1994
The original Donkey Kong arcade game, released in 1981, tells the classic story of how Mario saved his girlfriend, Pauline, from Donkey Kong's clutches. The Game Boy game of the same name builds upon its predecessor in almost every way imaginable.

Donkey Kong Country
SUPER NES, 1994
Featuring groundbreaking prerendered graphics and impeccably designed platforming action, Donkey Kong Country redefined what the big ape was all about and turned him into a full-fledged gaming hero. No one takes DK's bananas and gets away with it.

Donkey Kong Jungle Beat
GAMECUBE, 2005
An action game controlled via bongos sounds kind of questionable, but Donkey Kong pulled it off. The game looks beautiful, and it's especially fun to slap the drum controller to pound some sense into the monstrous bosses.



Donkey Kong Country Returns
Wii, 2010
After taking a break from traditional platforming for several years, Donkey Kong made a big-time comeback in Donkey Kong Country Returns. The game offers all the technique and challenge that made the series a hit, along with new foes and vastly improved visuals.

“What’cha do that for? I was having a nice nap.”

DONKEY KONG COUNTRY
GAME BOY ADVANCE, 2003

Donkey Kong might seem like he thinks about only bananas, but surely within his ape brain lies a tactical genius worthy of the leader of the DK Crew. Only someone of extreme mental acumen could withstand the mind-control abilities of the Tiki Tak Tribe, right?

DK’s large hands are good for much more than giving a thumbs-up. He also uses them to pound the ground, climb vines, toss barrels, drive karts, and snatch unsuspecting maidens.

Check out these pearly whites. Donkey Kong might have the best dental-hygiene habits in the history of video games.

Donkey Kong originally didn’t wear any clothing at all. By the mid 1990s, however, he began wearing his trademark monogrammed necktie.

If might makes right, Kong is never wrong. His massive arms give him unmatched strength!

WHAT’S IN A NAME?

What’s the deal with Donkey Kong’s name, anyway? After all, he’s not half donkey or anything. Donkey Kong’s creator, Shigeru Miyamoto, hasn’t given a definitive answer, but there are many stories about where the name originated. One theory is that the moniker was meant to be Monkey Kong but somehow got garbled, while another states that *donkey* is the word that a Japanese-to-English dictionary determined would be best to convey *silly* or *stupid*. Whatever the reason, we can’t imagine the big lug being called anything else.

MUSICAL MAYHEM

Donkey Kong is obviously big and strong, but did you know he’s also a naturally gifted musician? After discovering a set of magical bongos in the Donkey Konga games, DK proved his musical mastery by facing off against numerous other performers. The prime primate also utilizes bongos for his Final Smash move in Super Smash Bros. Brawl, proving that if a character is cool enough, he can even succeed by bongos.

POWER QUIZ

EASY

How many different block shapes (Tetrominoes) are there in the original Tetris?

TETRIS
PUSH START
© 1989 Nintendo

AVERAGE

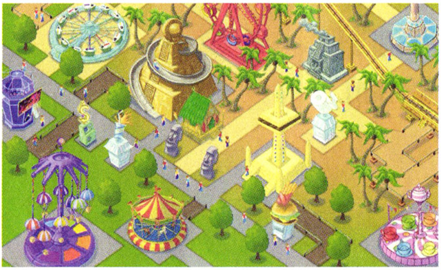
What puzzle game was the last title Nintendo released for the NES?

HARDCORE

The Japanese puzzle game Panel de Pon is better known by what title in the US?

ANSWERS

EASY: Seven; AVERAGE: Wario's Woods; HARDCORE: Puzzle League or Tetris Attack



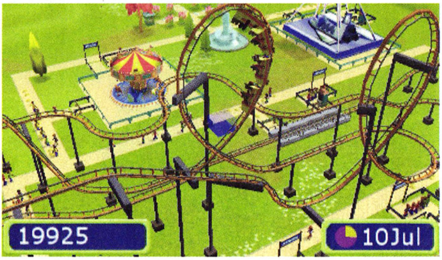
Is That a Roller Coaster in Your Pocket?

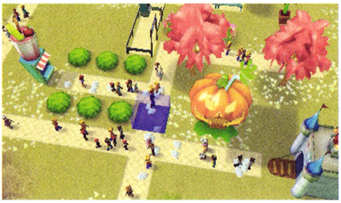
Now you can take your amusement empire with you in **RollerCoaster Tycoon** for the Nintendo 3DS.

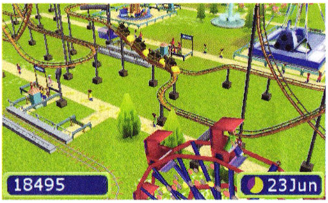
THE LONG-RUNNING RollerCoaster Tycoon series is laying tracks for Nintendo 3DS, courtesy of Atari and developer n-Space. RollerCoaster Tycoon 3D will, of course, take advantage of N3DS technology, including stereoscopic graphics—you'll be able to ride your coaster creations in 3D—and touch-screen controls. More importantly, this addition to the series is being built from the ground up with all-new assets exclusively for N3DS.

The RollerCoaster Tycoon franchise, which debuted in 1999 and has since sold upward of 11 million units, according to publisher Atari, has long offered players the opportunity to build the virtual amusement park of their dreams—focusing heavily on roller-coaster design, naturally. RollerCoaster Tycoon 3D will feature several coaster-design options, including suspended, hydraulic, wooden, steel, and inverted types. Of course, roller coasters alone do not a park make, so numerous other rides will be available to enterprising would-be tycoons, including monorails, prebuilt kiddie rides, carousels, and county-fair style-constructions. Parks can also be draped in themes, which will include haunted-house and Atari flavors.

n-Space is aiming for "deep, but approachable" for their park sim, so the complexities of juggling ride construction and park maintenance—which will include hiring and managing staff, such as janitors and mechanics—across multiple play modes (e.g., Coaster Creator and Sandbox) will be tempered with built-in tutorial features. Coaster Story mode, for example, will teach players how to do everything through a series of multifaceted scenarios/tutorials. Furthermore, an in-game advisor will assist with identifying park objectives and will inform players of their progress toward said objectives. Clearly, Atari and n-Space hope to offer something for both casual and simulation-obsessed gamers; when this one hits the streets in March, we'll see if they've succeeded. —**PATRICK C.**



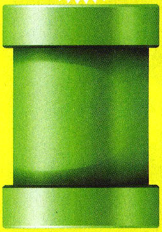




WARP ZONE

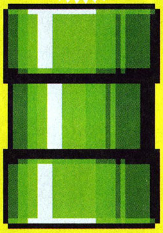
What we were writing about way back when

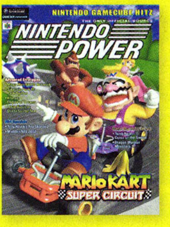
5 YEARS AGO



September 2006 was sort of the calm before the storm. Wii mania was quietly building, but there was still a lot that people didn't know about the system. To remedy that situation, we checked in with the fine folks at Ubisoft to get early looks at two of the system's most prominent third-party titles: crazed party game Rayman Raving Rabbids and first-person sword-combat game Red Steel. On the handheld front, the new Nintendo DS Lite and Mega Man ZX received substantial coverage.

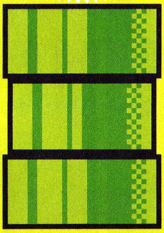
10 YEARS AGO




NINTENDO GAMECUBE HITZ
NINTENDO POWER
MARIO KART SUPER CIRCUIT

In September 2001, Nintendo Power shifted into high gear with a 12-page cover story spotlighting the Game Boy Advance release of Mario Kart: Super Circuit—the third game in the Mario Kart franchise and the first for a portable system. Meanwhile, excitement continued to grow for the impending arrival of the GameCube, thanks to previews of games such as Luigi's Mansion, Star Fox Adventures, Pikmin, and NBA Courtside 2002.

20 YEARS AGO



SUPER MARIO WORLD
Super Mario Knows Adventure!

After months of anticipation, the wait was finally over—the Super NES arrived just in time for Super Mario World to grab the cover spot of Nintendo Power Vol. 28. Sixteen pages of coverage introduced players to Yoshi, Mario's cape, Ghost Houses, the Star Road, and more—and that's barely scratching the surface of the classic platformer! A few other Super NES hits—Super Castlevania IV, SimCity, and Final Fight—also featured prominently.

Virtually Unlimited Entertainment

NINTENDO DS
SOLITAIRE OVERLOAD PLUS
101 Mahjong
202 Solitaire
303 Tangram
101 Picture Puzzles
ALMOST UNLIMITED PLAY!
TELEGAMES
ULTIMATE PUZZLE GAMES Sudoku Edition
9 x 9 Grids
8 x 8 Grids
6 x 6 Grids
4 x 4 Grids
Sudoku Solver
Difficulty Levels
Great 2 Player Modes
plus.......GAME SHARE!
Unlimited puzzles!
SOLITAIRE OVERLOAD
101 GAMES
FreeCell • Klondike • Golf
Pyramid • Yukon • Spider
...and 95 more games!
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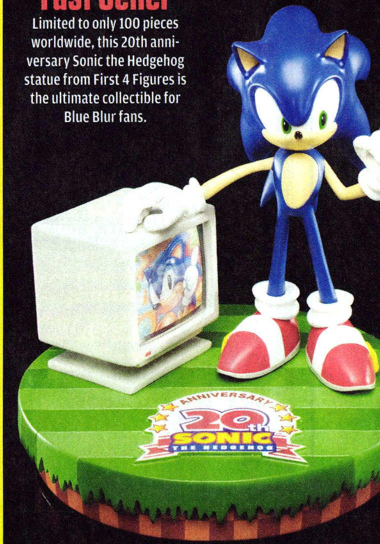
COLLECTOR'S CORNER

SERIOUSLY COOL STUFF FOR SERIOUS NINTENDO FANS

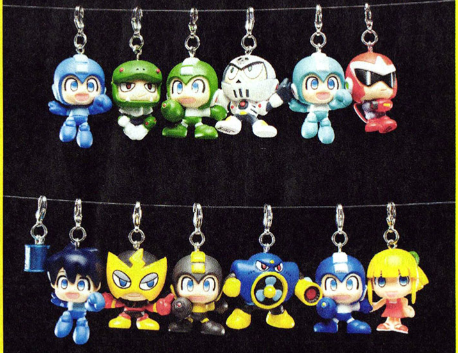
Fast Seller

Limited to only 100 pieces worldwide, this 20th anniversary Sonic the Hedgehog statue from First 4 Figures is the ultimate collectible for Blue Blur fans.



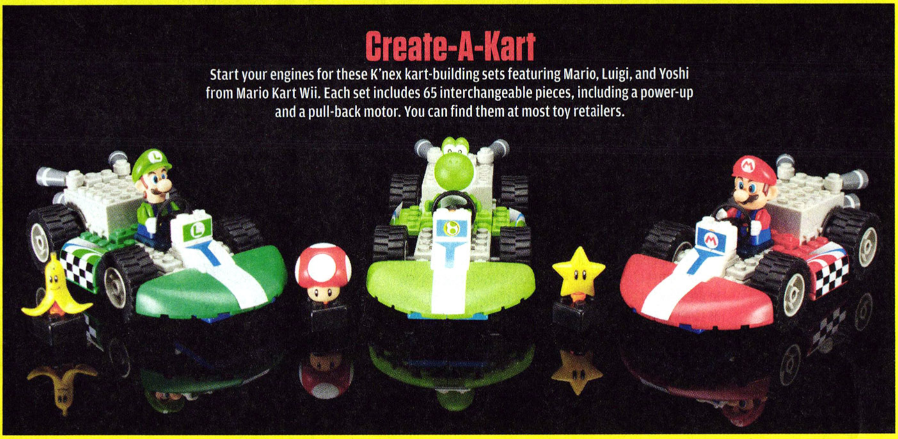
Mini Man

This series of Mega Man mini-figure keychains (sold in Japan) includes multiple versions of Mega Man, plus Proto Man, Roll, and several classic Mega Man villains.



Create-A-Kart

Start your engines for these K'nex kart-building sets featuring Mario, Luigi, and Yoshi from Mario Kart Wii. Each set includes 65 interchangeable pieces, including a power-up and a pull-back motor. You can find them at most toy retailers.



PHOTOGRAPHS BY MARK MADEO

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PAC-MAN CHAMPIONSHIP EDITION
PAC-MAN & Galaga DIMENSIONS
Galaga
Galaga 3D IMPACT
Galaga Legions
EVERYONE 10+
E 10+
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GAME FORECAST

Wii

The Adventures of Tintin*	Ubisoft	12/11
Ben 10 Galactic Racing	D3Publisher	10/11
The Black Eyed Peas Experience	Ubisoft	TBA
Cabela's Survival: Shadows of Katmai	Activision	11/11
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3	Activision	11/11
Cartoon Network Punch Time Explosion	Crave	HOL 11
Centipede: Infestation	Atari	11/11
Champion Jockey: G1 Jockey & Gallop Racer	Tecmo Koei	10/11
Country Dance 2	GameMill	11/11
DanceDanceRevolution II	Konami	FALL 11
Disney Universe	Disney	10/11
Family Feud 2012*	Ubisoft	11/11
Family Game Night 4: The Game Show	Electronic Arts	10/11
Family Game Night Fun Pack	Electronic Arts	10/11
Fishing Resort	Xseed	FALL 11
Fortune Street	Nintendo	HOL 11
Generator Rex: Agent of Providence	Activision	10/11
Go Vacation	Namco Bandai	10/11
Happy Feet Two: The Videogame	Warner Bros.	10/11
Jaws: Ultimate Predator	Majesco	11/11
Jimmie Johnson's Anything with an Engine	Autumn	10/11
Just Dance 3	Ubisoft	10/11
Karaoke Revolution Glee: Volume 3	Konami	11/11
Kirby's Return to Dream Land	Nintendo	FALL 11
The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword	Nintendo	HOL 11
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7	Warner Bros.	HOL 11
Mario Party 9	Nintendo	TBA
Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games	Sega	11/11
Marvel Super Hero Squad: Comic Combat	THQ	11/11
Monopoly Collection	Electronic Arts	10/11
NCIS	Ubisoft	10/11
Need for Speed: The Run	Electronic Arts	11/11
Nickelodeon Dance	2K Play	11/11
Power Rangers Samurai	Namco Bandai	11/12
The Price is Right Decades	Ubisoft	11/11
Pyroblazer	TBA	TBA
Rayman Origins	Ubisoft	2011
Rhythm Heaven	Nintendo	TBA
Rune Factory: Tides of Destiny	Natsume	10/11
Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure	Activision	10/11
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	Activision	10/11
Trivial Pursuit: Bet You Know It	Electronic Arts	10/11
WWE '12	THQ	11/11
X-Men: Destiny	Activision	9/11
Zumba Fitness 2	Majesco	11/11

Wii U

Aliens: Colonial Marines	Sega	TBA
Batman: Arkham City	Warner Bros.	TBA
Battlefield 3	Electronic Arts	TBA
Darksiders II	THQ	TBA
Killer Freaks from Outer Space	Ubisoft	TBA
LEGO City Stories	Nintendo	TBA
Metro: Last Light	THQ	TBA
Ninja Gaiden III: Razor's Edge	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Pikmin*	Nintendo	TBA
Super Smash Bros.*	Nintendo	TBA
Tekken*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon Online	Ubisoft	TBA

NINTENDO DS

Aliens: Infestation	Sega	10/10
Bejeweled 3	PopCap	HOL 11
Ben 10 Galactic Racing	D3Publisher	10/11
Beyblade Metal Masters	Konami	11/11
Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3—Defiance	Activision	11/11
Doodle Hex	TBA	TBA
Dora and Kai-Lan's Pet Shelter	2K Play	11/11
Generator Rex: Agent of Providence	Activision	10/11
Ghostwire: Link to the Paranormal	TBA	TBA
Happy Feet Two: The Videogame	Warner Bros.	10/11
Harvest Moon: The Tale of Two Towns DS	Natsume	9/11
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7	Warner Bros.	HOL 11
Moxie Girlz	GameMill	11/11
Pirate Battle	Orbital Media	TBA
Power Rangers Samurai	Namco Bandai	11/11
Pillow Pets	GameMill	11/11
Professor Layton and the Last Specter	Nintendo	10/11
Quest for Zhu	Activision	FALL 11
Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor 2	Atlus	WIN 12
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	Activision	10/11
Super Fossil Fighters	Nintendo	HOL 11
Team Umizoomi	2K Play	11/11
ThinkSMART Naraba: The Labyrinth of Light	Mentor	10/11
ThinkSMART Naraba: The Mysterious Palace	Mentor	10/11
Ultimate Brain Games	Telegames	WIN 12
Ultimate Card Games	Telegames	FALL 11
Wappy Dog	Activision	HOL 11
X-Men: Destiny	Activision	9/11
ZhuZhu Babies	Activision	FALL 11
Zoobles	Activision	11/11

NINTENDO 3DS

Ace Combat 3D	Namco Bandai	2011
The Adventures of Tintin	Ubisoft	12/11
Animal Crossing*	Nintendo	TBA
Ben 10 Galactic Racing	D3Publisher	11/11
BloodRayne: The Shroud	Majesco	TBA
A Boy and His Blob	Majesco	TBA
Brunswick Pro Bowling	Crave	TBA
Captain America: Super Soldier	Sega	FALL 11
Carnival Games*	Take-Two	TBA
Cave Story 3D	NIS America	11/11
Centipede: Infestation	Atari	11/11
Chocobo Racing 3D*	Square Enix	TBA
Contra*	Konami	TBA
Cooking Mama 4: Kitchen Magic	Majesco	10/11
Crash-City GP	Rocket	TBA
Crush 3D	Sega	2/12
Cute Puppies	Ubisoft	10/11
de Blob 2	THQ	TBA
Doctor Lautrec and the Forgotten Knights	Konami	10/11
Dragon Ball*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Dragon Quest*	Square Enix	TBA
Dynasty Warriors*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Etrian Odyssey*	Atlus	TBA
Farm*	Ubisoft	11/11
FIFA 12	Electronic Arts	FALL 11
Final Fantasy*	Square Enix	TBA
Fractured Soul 3D	Ignition	2012
Generator Rex: Agent of Providence	Activision	10/11
Gundam*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Happy Feet Two: The Videogame	Warner Bros.	10/11
Harvest Moon: The Tale of Two Towns 3D	Natsume	9/11
Heroes of Ruin	Square Enix	2012
The Hidden	Majesco	10/11
Horses 3D	Ubisoft	10/11
Imagine Babyz 3D	Ubisoft	10/11
Imagine Fashion Designer	Ubisoft	10/11
James Noir's Hollywood Crimes	Ubisoft	11/11
Jaws: Ultimate Predator	Majesco	11/11
Kid Icarus: Uprising	Nintendo	HOL 11
Kingdom Hearts: Dream Drop Distance	Square Enix	TBA
LEGO City Stories	Nintendo	2012
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7	Warner Bros.	HOL 11
Lion's Pride: Adventures in the Serengeti	Majesco	TBA
Lovely Lisa 3D	Tomy	TBA
Luigi's Mansion 2	Nintendo	2012
Mahjong Cub3D	Atlus	TBA
Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games	Sega	2/12
Mario Kart 7	Nintendo	12/11
Martha Stewart	Majesco	TBA
Marvel Super Hero Squad: The Infinity Gauntlet	THQ	10/11
Metal Gear Solid: Snake Eater 3D	Konami	HOL 11
Michael Jackson The Experience	Ubisoft	10/11
Nano Assault	Majesco	11/11
Naruto Shippuden Action*	Tomy	TBA
NCIS*	Ubisoft	3/12
Need for Speed: The Run	Electronic Arts	11/11
Nicoli's Pencil Puzzle	Konami	FALL 11
Ninja Gaiden*	Tecmo Koei	TBA
Pac-Man Party 3D	Namco Bandai	2011
Paper Mario*	Nintendo	TBA
Pet Zombies	Majesco	10/11
Planet Crashers 3D	Ignition	2012
Pokémon Rumble Blast	Nintendo	10/11
Professor Layton and the Mask of Miracle*	Level-5	TBA
Puzzler Mind Gym*	Ubisoft	9/11
Rayman Origins	Ubisoft	3/12
Raving Rabbids 5*	Ubisoft	11/11
Resident Evil: Revelations	Capcom	2012
RollerCoaster Tycoon 3D	Atari	3/12
Shin Megami Tensei: Persona*	Atlus	TBA
Shinobi	Sega	11/11
The Sims 3 Pets	Electronic Arts	FALL 11
Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure	Activision	10/11
Sonic Generations	Sega	11/11
Spider-Man: Edge of Time	Activision	FALL 11
Sudoku Premier Edition	Majesco	TBA
Super Mario 3D Land	Nintendo	11/11
Super Robot*	Namco Bandai	TBA
Super Smash Bros.*	Nintendo	TBA
Tales of the Abyss	Namco Bandai	WIN 12
Tekken 3D	Namco Bandai	TBA
Tetris	Tetris Online	10/11
Thor: God of Thunder	Sega	FALL 11
VS-robo	Rocket	TBA
WonderWorld Amusement Park	Majesco	TBA
Zoo Resort	Ubisoft	10/11

READERS' MOST WANTED

Vote for your favorites at www.nintendopower.com/polls

Wii

1. The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword
2. Kirby's Return to Dream Land
3. Mario Party 9
4. Mario & Sonic at the London 2012 Olympic Games
5. Rayman Origins

NINTENDO DS

1. Professor Layton and the Last Specter
2. LEGO Harry Potter: Years 5-7
3. Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor 2
4. Spider-Man: Edge of Time
5. Super Fossil Fighters

NINTENDO 3DS

1. Mario Kart 7
2. Super Mario 3D Land
3. Luigi's Mansion 2
4. Paper Mario*
5. Kid Icarus: Uprising

RED TEXT = GAMES ADDED THIS MONTH. * TENTATIVE TITLE **NOTE:** RELEASE DATES OFTEN CHANGE. ALL NINTENDO 3DS SCREENSHOTS HAVE BEEN CAPTURED IN 2D MODE.

"THE HISTORY OF LIGHT AND SHADOW WILL BE WRITTEN IN BLOOD!"

—GANONDORF, THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: TWILIGHT PRINCESS, 2006

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DOWNLOAD

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Pokédex 3D

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BOBBY CARROT FOREVER
BURN THE ROPE

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SUPER E.D.F.: EARTH DEFENSE FORCE

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KUNG FU DRAGON
THE LOST TOWN—THE DUST
MOTO EXTREME
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TROLLBOARDER

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GAME & WATCH GALLERY
KIRBY'S DREAM LAND
QIX

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3D CLASSICS: XEVIOUS

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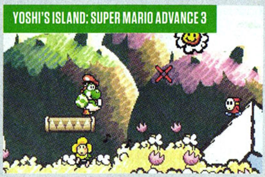
LET'S GOLF 3D

METROID FUSION

WARIOWARE INC.: MEGA MICROGAME$

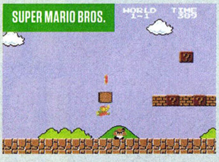


YOSHI'S ISLAND: SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 3

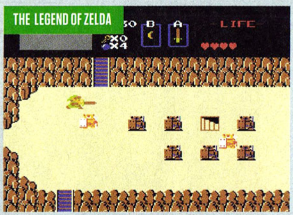
More Nintendo eShop Classics

Downloadable NES and GBA games will be available to Nintendo 3DS owners.

IN JULY, NINTENDO announced some great news for fans of classic gaming: NES and Game Boy Advance games are making their way to the Nintendo 3DS Virtual Console service. The news is even better for early adopters of the Nintendo 3DS system; if you've logged onto the Nintendo eShop any time before Aug. 12, you'll be automatically enrolled in the Nintendo 3DS Ambassador program, and you'll be able to get the games for free. Starting on September 1, Ambassadors will be able to download portable versions of 10 of the NES era's greatest hits, including Super Mario Bros., The Legend of Zelda, Donkey Kong Jr., Ice Climber, and Balloon Fight. (The NES Virtual Console games will be made available to non-Ambassadors via the Nintendo eShop at a later date.) Before the end of the year, 10 downloadable Game Boy Advance Virtual Console games—such as Mario vs. Donkey Kong, Yoshi's Island: Super Mario Advance 3, Metroid Fusion, Mario Kart: Super Circuit, and WarioWare Inc.: Mega Microgame$—will also be available to Ambassadors for no charge. Nintendo has stated that it "currently has no plans to make these 10 [GBA] games available to the general public on the Nintendo 3DS in the future." As of press time, Nintendo representatives could not confirm if there would be any additional NES or GBA games released on N3DS Virtual Console beyond the 20 titles that were initially announced, but the future certainly looks bright for vintage gaming on the go. **—HORATIO M.**

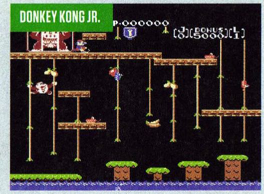


SUPER MARIO BROS.



THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

You can't go wrong with heroes like Mario, Donkey Kong, and Link.

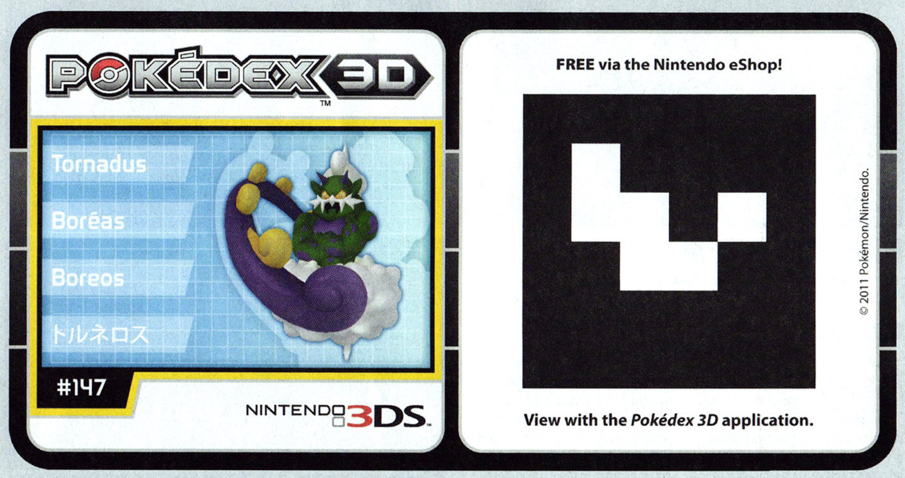


DONKEY KONG JR.

ICE CLIMBER

A Storm Is Coming

The sky-surfing Tornadus is ready to take over your Pokédex 3D!



FREE via the Nintendo eShop!

View with the *Pokédex 3D* application.

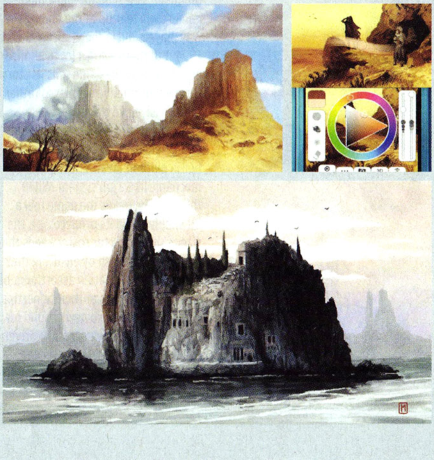
© 2011 Pokémon/Nintendo.

STILL TRYING to fill out your Pokédex 3D? We're here to help! Hot on the heels of last issue's Victini AR Marker, this month we're offering one for Tornadus. You can receive the Pokémon data over SpotPass once the AR Marker is scanned, which is the only way to register Tornadus on your own (the other option is to get it from someone who has it already). Check back next issue for yet another Legendary Flying-type Pokémon!

Unleash the Rainbow

Colors! 3D for Nintendo 3DS lets you paint like you've never painted before.

PREVIOUSLY A HIT on the iPhone and iPod touch, Colors! 3D is a full-featured painting program that's headed to the Nintendo 3DS via the Nintendo eShop. As you'd expect from a contemporary art program, you can choose your brush style and size, select from thousands of colors, and use an assortment of helpful tools, such as an eyedropper. But unlike other programs of this type—or previous releases of Colors!—the N3DS version allows you to create multilayered paintings that are viewable in stereoscopic 3D. Other features include the ability for up to four players to collaborate on a painting, and the ability to replay the creative process so you can improve your painting technique. Once you've created your masterpiece, you'll be able to upload it to a public gallery or save it as a photo so you can share it with friends. Published and developed by Collecting Smiles (and codeveloped by Griptonite Games), Colors! 3D should be available in October. **—CHRIS H.**



EVALUATION STATION

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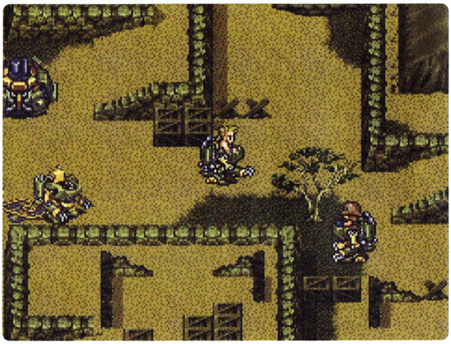
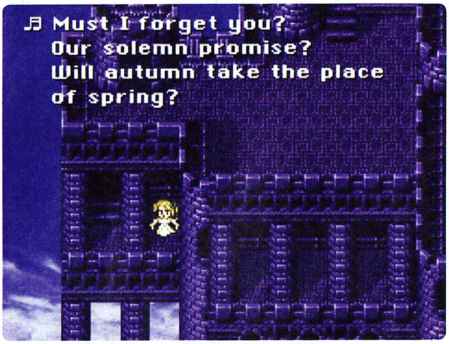
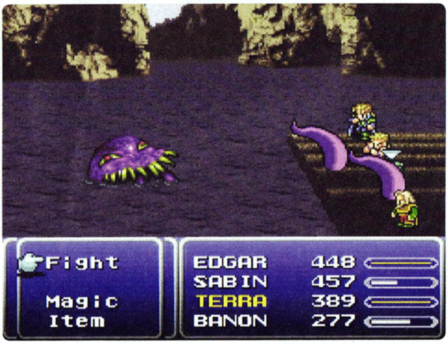
Wii VIRTUAL CONSOLE





♫ Must I forget you?
Our solemn promise?
Will autumn take the place
of spring?



FINAL FANTASY III

PLATFORM: **SUPER NES** ORIGINALLY RELEASED: **1994** PUBLISHER: **SQUARE ENIX**
GENRE: **RPG** PRICE: **800 POINTS**

Casey L.'s Pick

Final Fantasy III (which is now better known as Final Fantasy VI) is one of the all-time great RPGs. It built upon the storytelling advancements of Final Fantasy IV and the gameplay advancements of Final Fantasy V to make for Square's most ambitious and successful game of the Super NES era. Seventeen years later the game holds up remarkably well, maintaining all of the era's charm and relatively few of its frustrations.

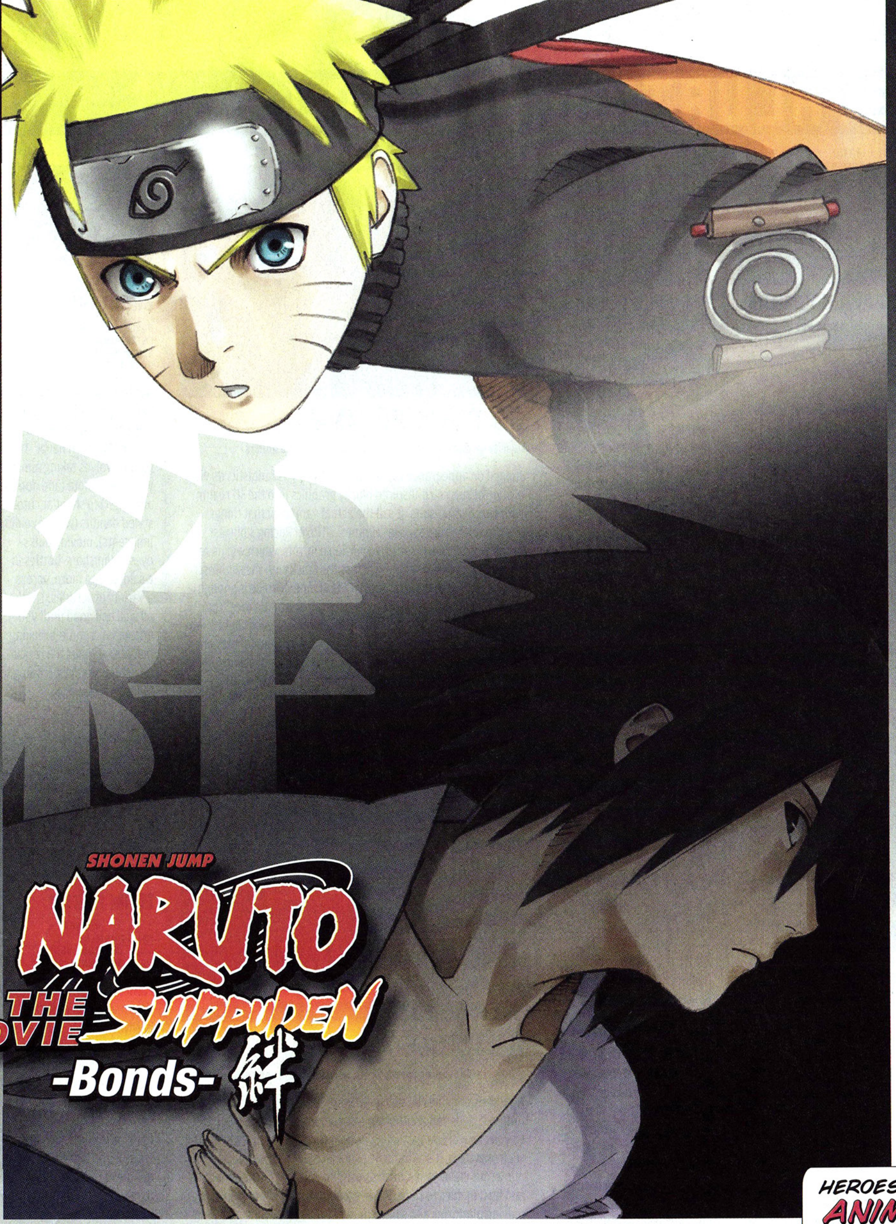
Final Fantasy III broke from the series's traditional-fantasy roots to introduce a steampunk-inspired world in which technology has mostly replaced magic. You play as the members of a rebel group trying to revive magic in order to repel a conquest-hungry empire. The 14 heroes of your party (still a record number for the series) are a charming bunch of rogues and misfits that mark a welcome break from the usual starry-eyed hero archetypes. The story was famous in its day for heart-tugging twists, but seems a bit quaint now; I doubt many modern gamers will tear up at the ending the way players did in the innocent days of 1994. But there's still a lot to admire about the way the game tells its story through interactive set pieces rather than passive event scenes.

Mechanically, FFIII offers a set of unique abilities for each cast member in place of an all-encompassing mechanic like a job system. While this initially makes the game feel a bit simpler than its predecessor, the size of the character roster keeps the battle system fresh by ensuring that players have a rotating assortment of interesting options at their fingertips. The game also broke new ground for the series by following a story-driven first half with a wide-open second half that offers a level of freedom and exploration that hadn't been in the series before and, sadly, hasn't appeared since.

The dot-pixel graphics of FFIII are among the finest ever made for the Super NES, and they still hold a great deal of charm. Similarly, the composition of the soundtrack stands as some of composer Nobuo Uematsu's finest work. However, there are a few aspects of the game that do seem out of step with modern sensibilities: the voice samples in the game's famous opera scene sound painfully dated, the random encounters trigger a bit too frequently, the save points can be spaced frustratingly far apart, and at times the game fails to make your next objective sufficiently clear.

Nevertheless, FFIII is easily one the most playable and enjoyable RPGs in the Virtual Console library. All Final Fantasy fans should experience this pivotal title, and players who already have may be surprised to discover that the game is still every bit as fun as they remember.

Recommended



SHONEN JUMP
NARUTO
THE MOVIE
SHIPPUDEN
-Bonds- 絆

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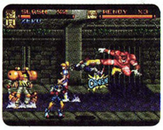


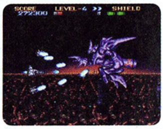
BRAWL BROTHERS

PLATFORM: SUPER NES
ORIGINALLY RELEASED: 1993
PUBLISHER: JALECO
GENRE: ACTION
PRICE: 800 POINTS

Like its predecessor, Rival Turf!, Brawl Brothers is a decent—but not great—side-scrolling beat-'em-up. This game offers co-op action and five playable characters, but the suspect collision detection (which leads to you taking a lot of cheap hits) drags down the experience. Compared to the top classic titles in the genre, Brawl Brothers also suffers from so-so visuals and a limited repertoire of moves. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

Wii VIRTUAL CONSOLE



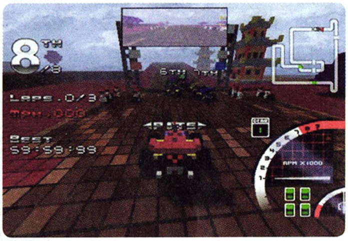
SUPER E.D.F.: EARTH DEFENSE FORCE

PLATFORM: SUPER NES
ORIGINALLY RELEASED: 1992
PUBLISHER: JALECO
GENRE: SHOOTER
PRICE: 800 POINTS

Unrelated to the similarly named Xbox 360 titles, Super E.D.F. is a high-intensity side-scrolling shooter that offers some unique twists on the genre, such as the ability to level up and the option to change the formation of your weapon pods on the fly. When it comes to the actual gameplay, though, the action is somewhat typical, and the steep difficulty (continues are quite limited) may turn off some players. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

WiiWARE



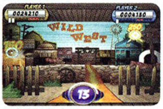
3D PIXEL RACING

PUBLISHER: MICROFORUM **GENRE:** RACING **PRICE:** 500 POINTS

Judged on appearance alone, 3D Pixel Racing is fantastic. Its visual style brings retro-inspired blocky graphics into the 3D realm with charming results. It's in the actual gameplay that things start to take a turn for the "Hmmm...." Pixel Racing's biggest problem is its overly sensitive motion controls, which will have most players wildly skidding across the track with the slightest twitch. Thanks to the aggressive CPU AI, one mistake is enough to dump you into last place for the remainder of the race. The course boundaries are also laughably tiny. Veer even slightly into the grass, and the game jarringly blinks your car out of existence before dropping it back on the road. With a bit of tweaking this title could be great, but as is it's just decent. —**PHIL T.**

Hmmm...

WiiWARE



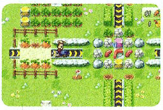
BIG TOWN SHOOT OUT

PUBLISHER: KORNER ENTERTAINMENT
GENRE: PUZZLE
PRICE: 800 POINTS

Big Town Shoot Out is a lot like an updated version of Hogan's Alley, but with a distinct Western flavor. The game involves taking aim with your Wii Remote (and optional Zapper) to shoot at cutout-styled bandits (while avoiding innocents), moving bull's-eyes, falling hats, bottles in a saloon, and more, across a variety of settings. That's all well and good until you encounter a game-breaking hangup: at times the reticle unavoidably sticks, leading to failure. —**DAVID O.**

Grumble Grumble

WiiWARE



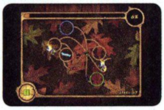
BOBBY CARROT FOREVER

PUBLISHER: FDG ENTERTAINMENT
GENRE: PUZZLE
PRICE: 800 POINTS

The absurdly named Bobby Carrot Forever offers players grid-based collection puzzles of the usual sort; you'll interact with all manner of switches and modes of transportation to negotiate obstacles on your way to collecting carrots scattered over the puzzle "board." A basic adventure framework (providing context), high creativity quotient, and admirable complexity/difficulty give this puzzler just enough "oomph" to overcome its run-of-the-mill trappings. —**PATRICK C.**

Recommended

WiiWARE



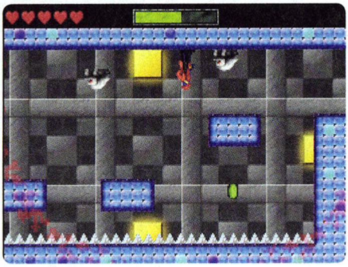
BURN THE ROPE

PUBLISHER: BIG BLUE BUBBLE
GENRE: PUZZLE
PRICE: 1,000 POINTS

Burn the Rope's premise is no doubt interesting; players ignite shapes "drawn" in rope, then rotate the canvas as necessary—in real time—to ensure the entire rope (and anything on it) is consumed in flames. The trick lies in ensuring the flames always burn upward. Unfortunately, at this price point Big Blue Bubble sets very high expectations, and the evolution of gameplay here (e.g., adding bugs and color-coded flames/ropes) fails to keep the concept fresh. —**PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



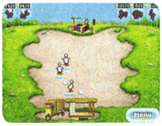
ANTIPOLE

PUBLISHER: SATURNINE GAMES **GENRE:** ACTION **PRICE:** 500 POINTS; $4.99

Hundreds of games let you jump your way past pits of spikes, but Antipole gives you another option: temporarily invert gravity so you can walk on the ceiling or float through the air to bypass such obstacles. It's a fantastic play mechanic that can be used in numerous clever ways, such as sending missiles back at enemies and leading foes to their doom. Combined with genre staples like moving platforms and switch puzzles, you get a very compelling and fun game. The game also has a smooth difficulty curve and plenty of replay value. My one complaint is that you often can't see what's coming next, which frequently requires you to take a literal leap of faith into the unknown. —**CHRIS H.**

Recommended

DSiWARE



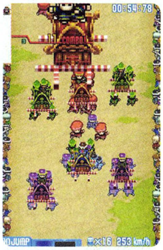
FARM FRENZY

PUBLISHER: ALAWAR ENTERTAINMENT
GENRE: ALTERNATIVE
PRICE: 500 POINTS; $4.99

Farm Frenzy offers manic time management with a barnyard theme. The cycle of play requires planting grass to feed various animals, collecting the edible byproducts of said animals, processing these byproducts into foodstuffs, then selling these stuffs in the big city to accumulate cash that can be used to maintain and upgrade your facilities. Like most games of this type, it's an adequate time sink, but nothing about the experience makes it a must-play. —**PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



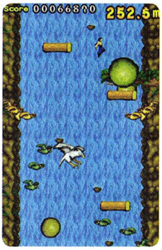
GO SERIES: PORTABLE SHRINE WARS

PUBLISHER: GAMEBRIDGE
GENRE: ACTION
PRICE: 200 POINTS; $1.99

This game turns the ancient Japanese tradition of carrying a *mikoshi* (a portable shrine) into a wacky racing game. Launching your shrine-bearers to attack your rivals and collecting fallen enemy bearers adds an element of technique and results in plenty of chaotic fun. —**PHIL T.**

Recommended

DSiWARE



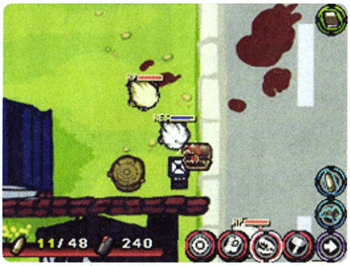
KUNG FU DRAGON

PUBLISHER: AGETEC
GENRE: PLATFORMER
PRICE: 200 POINTS; $1.99

If you think Kung Fu Dragon features martial-arts action, think again. Despite what the title implies, this game is all about hardcore vertical platforming. As a simple jumping game Kung Fu Dragon isn't bad, but it is very basic (and sometimes frustrating). Good thing it's available for a bargain price. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



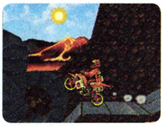
THE LOST TOWN—THE DUST

PUBLISHER: CIRCLE ENTERTAINMENT **GENRE:** STRATEGY
PRICE: 500 POINTS; $4.99

Deftly blending strategy and RPG elements, The Lost Town casts players as the defender of a camp beset by monsters. Gameplay cycles between day and night; by day, you scour the surrounding town for loot, monsters in need of slaying, and survivors. You also prepare for nightfall by improving defenses, laying traps, upgrading weapons, and hiring mercenaries. And what happens by night? An assault on camp by an unthinking beastly horde, of course. While the graphics are uninspired and the pathfinding suspect, the winning premise, character-building, and addictive escalation are too alluring to ignore. —**PATRICK C.**

Recommended

DSiWARE



MOTO EXTREME

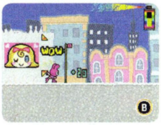
PUBLISHER: CHILLINGO
GENRE: PLATFORMER
PRICE: 800 POINTS; $7.99

As you might expect, Moto eXtreme is a game about riding motocross bikes. But by "riding," I mean driving up walls and platforming your way through 2D obstacle courses. Your bike's bouncy quality, wonky physics, and low gravity make most levels fun, but navigating cramped spots is overly tedious—especially when the bike will often glitch itself into the environment. Even with glitches aside, an $8 price tag seems a tad steep for this game.

—**CODY M.**

Hmmm...

DSiWARE



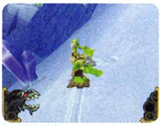
ROLLER ANGELS

PUBLISHER: AGETEC
GENRE: PLATFORMER
PRICE: 500 POINTS; $4.99

If you combined the skate-and-tag action of Sega's cult classic Jet Grind Radio with a 2D platformer and mixed in an abundance of sickening cuteness, you'd likely get a result a lot like Roller Angels. The problem, however, is that the game takes a long time to get interesting. The early levels are easy to the point of being boring, but the later ones—which throw a lot at you at once—are pretty neat. Is it worth the effort to get to the good stuff, though? Probably not. —**CHRIS H.**

Recommended

DSiWARE



TROLLBOARDER

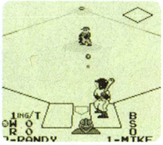
PUBLISHER: ENJOY GAMING
GENRE: RACING
PRICE: 200 POINTS; $1.99

The only good part of Trollboarder is its graphics, which are colorful and smooth. The rest is all downhill. You're tasked with repeating the same three missions over and over to earn gold. The gameplay is as straightforward as it comes—the enemies never change, and there's very little course variety. There is no consequence for failure, the hit detection is inconsistent, the sound effects are annoying, and the story is nonexistent.

—**KENNY M.**

Grumble Grumble

N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE



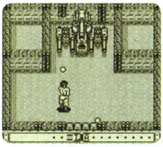
BASEBALL

PLATFORM: GAME BOY
ORIGINALLY RELEASED: 1989
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
GENRE: SPORTS
PRICE: $2.99

If you're old enough to have played '80s-era baseball games, you know how charmingly similar they were; decide whether to steal, take a swing, and...that's about it! Baseball is a particularly rudimentary riff on the formula (due to a lack of color and a crawling pace, specifically), so those looking for a nostalgic return to the pre-sim days of sports gaming should pause if they don't yearn for such spartan times. —**PATRICK C.**

Hmmm...

N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE



FORTIFIED ZONE

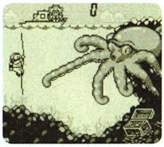
PLATFORM: GAME BOY
ORIGINALLY RELEASED: 1991
PUBLISHER: JALECO
GENRE: ACTION
PRICE: $3.99

Part shooter and part top-down military adventure, Fortified Zone was a rather unique portable game for its time. The methodical pace and emphasis on exploration (there are plenty of keys and switches to find) make the title feel a bit like a watered-down version of Metal Gear. Fortified Zone isn't especially challenging and it is fairly brief, but it's certainly worth checking out for the low price.

—**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE



GAME & WATCH GALLERY

PLATFORM: GAME BOY
ORIGINALLY RELEASED: 1997
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
GENRE: ACTION
PRICE: $2.99

It's nice to have four of Nintendo's classic Game & Watch games to play on the go, but the real draw of this collection is the updates to the LCD originals. The addition of Mario and friends provides some visual flair, and the minor gameplay tweaks add modern sensibilities to the action. Unlockable historical galleries offer incentive to top your high scores.

—**PHIL T.**

Recommended

EVALUATION STATION

Wii DOWNLOAD
NINTENDO DSi DOWNLOAD
NINTENDO 3DS DOWNLOAD

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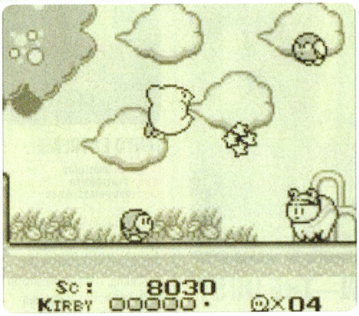
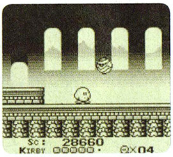
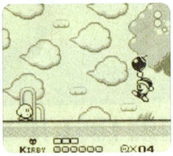






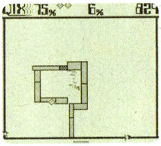
KIRBY'S DREAM LAND

PLATFORM: GAME BOY **ORIGINALLY RELEASED:** 1992 **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO **GENRE:** PLATFORMER **PRICE:** $3.99

As much of a Kirby fan as I am, I must admit that I never played Kirby's Dream Land when it was originally released on Game Boy. After having experienced the game on Nintendo 3DS, I realize just how much I was missing out on all those years ago; this is one of the better Game Boy titles I've played. It does take some getting used to if you've played only newer Kirby adventures, however. The most significant difference between this installment and its successors is the fact that Kirby can't steal enemies' abilities, which makes it a more challenging game. Still, that doesn't mean Kirby's Dream Land is hard—this title is easily beaten in under an hour. Fortunately, finishing it once unlocks a higher difficulty level. —**JUSTIN C.**

Recommended

N3DS VIRTUAL CONSOLE



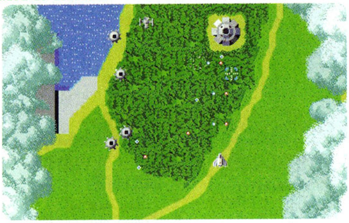
QIX

PLATFORM: GAME BOY
ORIGINALLY RELEASED: 1990
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
GENRE: PUZZLE
PRICE: $2.99

Based on a vintage arcade title, Qix is a game in which you attempt to cordon off sections of the play field without crashing into enemies. It's fun for a while, but since the main foe—the titular Qix—moves about randomly, luck plays a huge part in your success. The Virtual Console's Restore Point feature helps alleviate some frustration, but the game starts feeling dry after a few stages. —**CHRIS H.**

Hmmm...

N3DS 3D CLASSICS



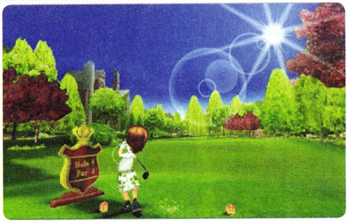
3D CLASSICS: XEVIOUS

PLATFORM: NES **ORIGINALLY RELEASED:** 1988 **PUBLISHER:** NAMCO BANDAI
GENRE: SHOOTER **PRICE:** $5.99

Back in the '80s, Namco's Xevious improved on the standard shooter by bringing new depth to the gameplay. Not only could players attack enemies in the air, but they also had to drop bombs on ground-based targets. This dual-plane setup made the arcade classic a perfect candidate to receive an upgrade on the Nintendo 3DS. And yes, 3D Classics: Xevious looks fantastic with the addition of that third dimension. Seeing the ground move well below your fighter is a simple yet effective graphical enhancement. The fast-paced action still holds up, too. Maintaining control over both play fields at once is an enjoyable challenge. The droning, repetitive soundtrack may wear on those not raised in the early days of the arcade, but it still has a retro charm about it. —**PHIL T.**

Recommended

N3DS DOWNLOAD



LET'S GOLF 3D

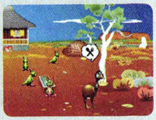
PUBLISHER: GAMELOFT **GENRE:** SPORTS **PRICE:** $6.99

Gameloft is known for, um, *borrowing* ideas from other games, and the Mario Golf/We Love Golf!-esque Let's Golf 3D is no different. Well, it has 3D visuals, so that's something—even if its 3D effect is a feature that I personally found to be more distracting than cool in this case. Despite the fact that Let's Golf 3D may not be original, however, it's not like you can find authentic Mario Golf-style experiences on Nintendo 3DS at this moment. And this title does a very good job of replicating much of what made the Camelot-developed golf games so compelling in the first place: the controls are easy to learn and the gameplay is simple yet rewarding. Considering this title's relatively low price, it would be foolish to skip over Let's Golf 3D just because it's not entirely fresh. —**JUSTIN C.**

Recommended

ALSO AVAILABLE

Music enthusiasts might want to consider WiiWare title **Just Jam** (800 Points). Though not a game, the surprisingly complex program allows you to mix and modify tunes in a variety of musical genres.... If you'd prefer to keep things simple, you can check out DSiWare games **Extreme Hangman 2** (200 Points/$1.99) or **Boardwalk Ball Toss** (200 Points/$1.99), which provide digital versions of classic diversions.... Want to learn about the microscopic world? Then try educational DSiWare title **AfterZoom** (500 Points/$4.99).... If you're into fashion more than science, then **Make Up & Style** (500 Points/$4.99) for DSiWare might be up your alley.... **Jewel Keepers: Easter Island** (500 Points/$4.99) is now on DSiWare. The WiiWare version scored a "Hmmm..." a few issues back.... **Puzzle Fever** (500 Points/$4.99) for DSiWare will put your shape-fitting skills to the test.... If you know what euchre is, you'll be glad to know there's now a DSiWare version of it called **Hearts Spades Euchre** (500 Points/$4.99).... Though previous installments in their respective series have been less than stellar, hopefully DSiWare games **Just Sing! 80s** (500 Points/$4.99), **My Australian Farm** (200 Points/$1.99), and **Oscar's World Tour** (500 Points/$4.99) will outclass their predecessors.



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PREVIEWS

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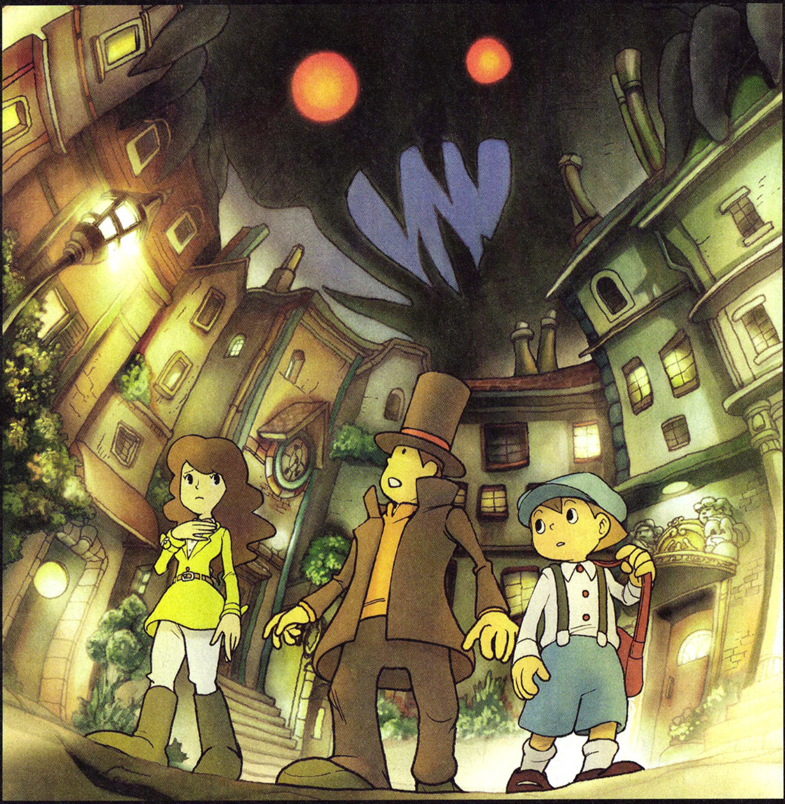


PROFESSOR LAYTON AND THE LAST SPECTER

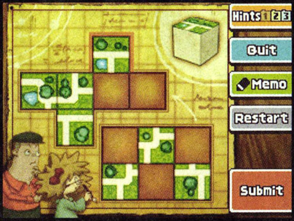
A classic example of brains versus brute force

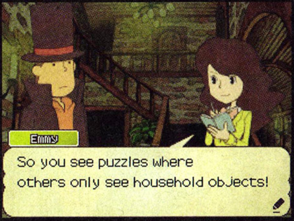
AT THE END of last year's Professor Layton and the Unwound Future, puzzle enthusiast Professor Hershel Layton bid a tearful farewell to his young apprentice, Luke. In Professor Layton and the Last Specter, players will get to visit the past and discover just how the two became such close friends to begin with.

It all starts when the professor receives a letter from an old friend, Clark Triton. Formerly a university classmate of Professor Layton's, Clark is now the mayor of the small countryside village of Misthallery, a town that is known not only for its thick fog, but also for the fact that the remains of an ancient city were recently discovered nearby. Clark's letter states that a mysterious, giant, mist-shrouded specter has been terrorizing the citizens and destroying their homes, and asks Layton for help with the matter. With no time to waste, Layton hops into his famed Laytonmobile, and—accompanied by his newly hired assistant, Emmy Altava—zips off to Misthallery to see what the commotion is all about.

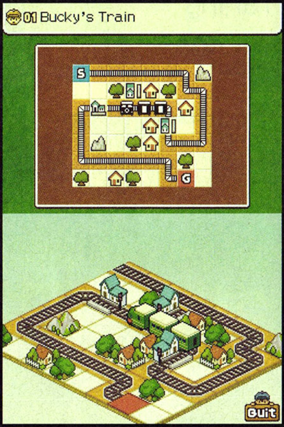
What the professor encounters next should be familiar to anyone who's played a Professor Layton game before: a strange location full of places to explore, objects to investigate, quirky characters to talk to, mysteries to unravel, and puzzles to solve. Navigating the town is sheer simplicity—like in previous Layton games, you need only tap the touch screen to move, talk, or interact—but in true series fashion, if you really wanna get anything done, you're gonna need to use a few brain cells. Want the directions to Clark's house? You'll have to solve a puzzle. Need to cross a rope bridge? Time for another puzzle. Everywhere you go, you'll encounter characters who need a puzzle solved, or you'll see an ordinary object that prompts the professor or Emmy to recall a favorite brain-teaser.

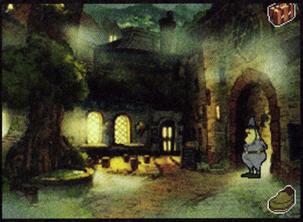
Of course, solving the myriad head-scratchers is what makes the Layton games so fun, and there's no lack of variety. The challenges span the gamut from logic to math to wordplay to spatial reasoning to jigsaw-style puzzles to riddles and beyond. In one puzzle, you may



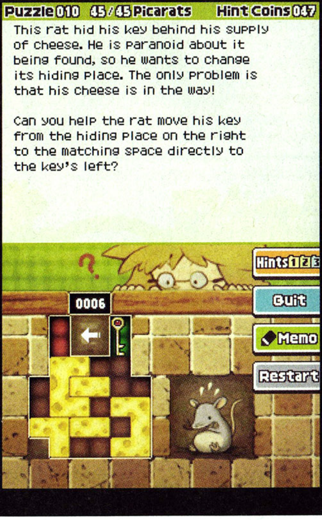


So you see puzzles where others only see household objects!



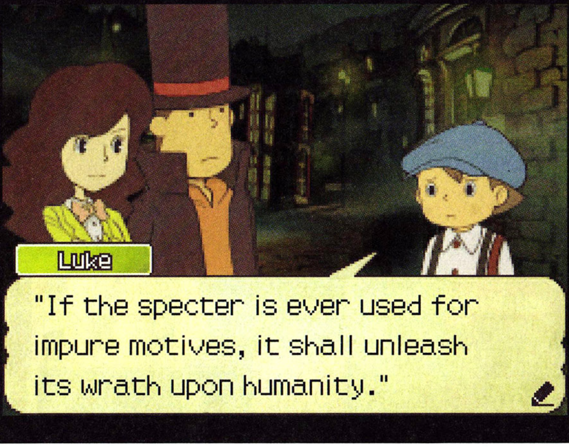


[Above] Like previous installments of the series, Professor Layton and the Last Specter features a number of minigames.

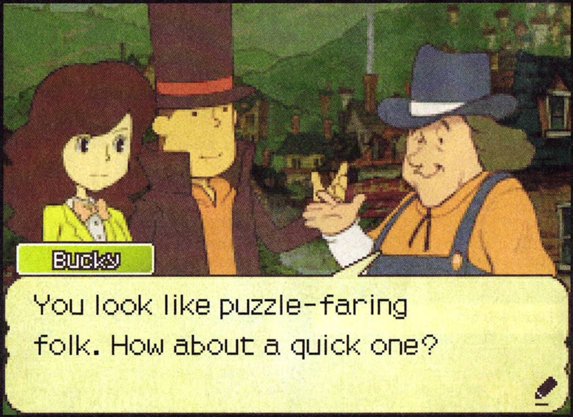

Puzzle 010 45/45 Picarats Hint Coins 047

This rat hid his key behind his supply of cheese. He is paranoid about it being found, so he wants to change its hiding place. The only problem is that his cheese is in the way!

Can you help the rat move his key from the hiding place on the right to the matching space directly to the key's left?



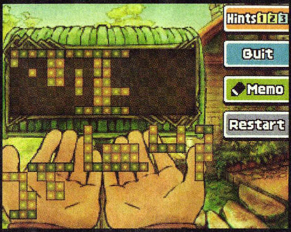
"If the specter is ever used for impure motives, it shall unleash its wrath upon humanity."



Bucky

You look like puzzle-faring folk. How about a quick one?

[Below] Where do all these pieces go? It's up to Professor Layton to sort it all out.



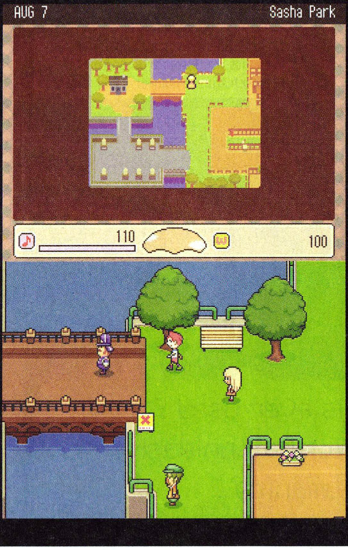
have to assemble a sequence of numbers according to a handful of clues, whereas another may require you to look at a drawing to find the images of hidden cats, and another may necessitate fitting clusters of items into a suitcase. And those infamous Layton block-pushing puzzles (in which you must maneuver tightly packed blocks so you can get an object to a certain location) are back, too.

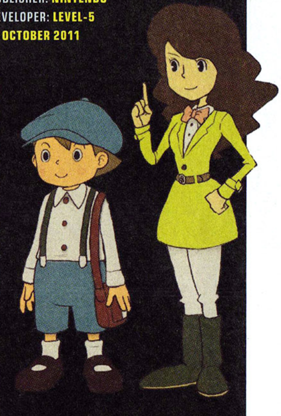
The biggest puzzle, however, is undoubtedly the strange happenings around town. As the smashed houses you encounter prove, the specter is no figment of the imagination, but why is it attacking, and why does a flute play prior to the assault? Upon reaching Clark's house, the answers don't become any clearer. However, the visit presents Layton with the opportunity to meet Clark's rather withdrawn son, Luke—the very same Luke that eventually becomes Layton's apprentice. Somehow, Luke is able to predict when and where the specter will attack—an ability that enables the professor to see the entity firsthand when it strikes the northern part of town that night—but even he doesn't know from where it's come. Could it be the specter of legend, returned to destroy everything in its path, or is there a more logical explanation?

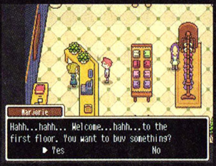
Fortunately, if pursuing the truth gets to be too overwhelming, there are other ways to spend your time. Vigorous investigation of your surroundings allows you to discover hidden artifacts, and like in previous Layton titles, there is a handful of minigames to partake in. A toy-train minigame, for example, challenges you to guide your train to every station on a map without running out of fuel, while a fish-themed minigame allows you to guide a finned friend to collect coins.

The biggest diversion of all, however, is completely separate from the game's main story mode. Known as Professor Layton's London Life, this mode is an expansive RPG reminiscent of Animal Crossing that offers more than 100 hours of content. After customizing your character (including the gender, hairstyle, facial expression, etc.), you'll get to explore the retro-inspired 2D burg of Little London to amass wealth and happiness by taking on odd jobs (such as janitorial work) and completing requests. You'll get to obtain new outfits, decorate your apartment, and interact with almost every character from past Professor Layton games, from Inspector Chelmey to Granny Riddleton. Given that this bonus mode features more content than some entire standalone games, it's safe to say that Professor Layton and the Last Specter will be the series's deepest and most expansive outing yet. —**CHRIS H.**

DS PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **LEVEL-5**
RELEASE: **OCTOBER 2011**

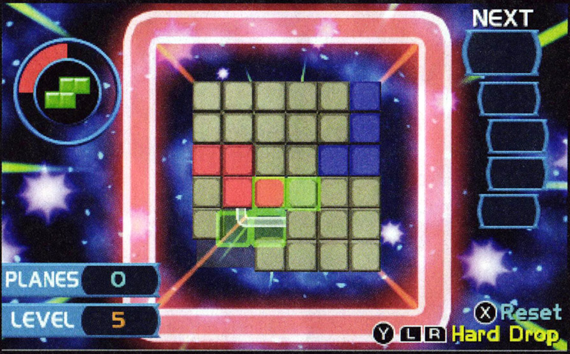


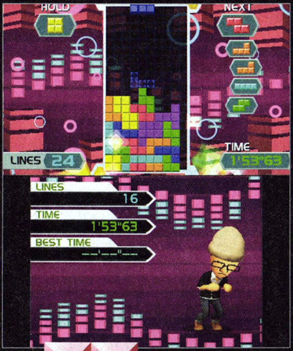


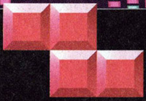


Marjorie

Hahh...hahh... Welcome...hahh...to the first floor. You want to buy something?
▶ Yes No





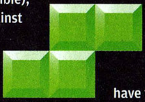


TETRIS

It's called Tetris, but it ain't just Tetris.

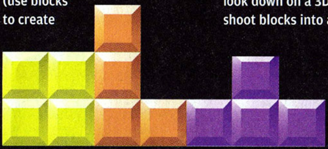
TETRIS AND PORTABLE Nintendo systems have gone hand in hand since the classic Russian falling-block puzzler was bundled with the original Game Boy more than 20 years ago. That relationship will soon continue when the latest game in the franchise—simply titled Tetris—arrives on the Nintendo 3DS handheld.

Naturally, this 3D-enhanced version of Tetris features plenty of familiar, traditional modes, such as Marathon mode (with an endless option), Sprint mode (in which you must clear 40 lines as quickly as possible), and versus battles (against local or online human opponents, or against CPU foes). The game also offers several of the more popular party modes that have appeared in titles like Tetris Party Deluxe, including Tower Climber (use blocks to create steps so a small character can reach the top of a tower), Stage Racer (maneuver blocks through a maze), Shadow Wide (place blocks to fill out a silhouette), and Bombliss Plus (clear lines with explosive Bomb Pieces).

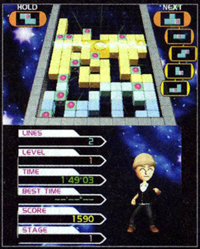


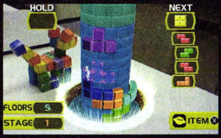
But it's the new modes that help this version of Tetris stand out. Fever mode challenges you with a 60-second time limit and a small play field, and your goal is to rack up as large a score as you can while taking advantage of "color challenge" bonuses and six types of items. Survival mode features a similarly small play field, but instead of a time limit, you'll have to contend with lines that appear from below to constantly push your blocks upward. Other modes take special advantage of the hardware's capabilities: in Fit mode you look down on a 3D field and shoot blocks into a series of Tetromino-shaped holes, and in the AR modes (AR Marathon and AR Climber), you get to merge falling-block fun with your real-world surroundings.

With 20 modes in total, Mii integration, and support for up to eight players, this version of Tetris should have something for everybody.
—**CHRIS H.**

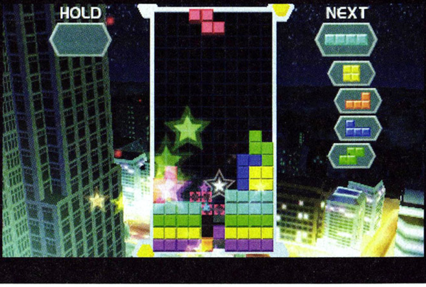


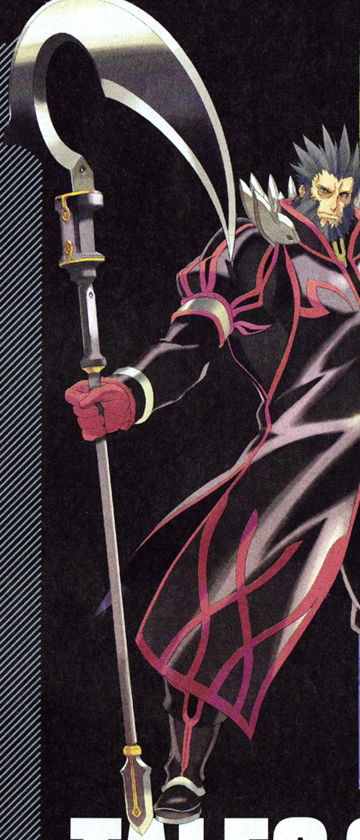
N3DS PUBLISHER: **TETRIS ONLINE**
DEVELOPER: **HUDSON**
RELEASE: **OCTOBER 2011**

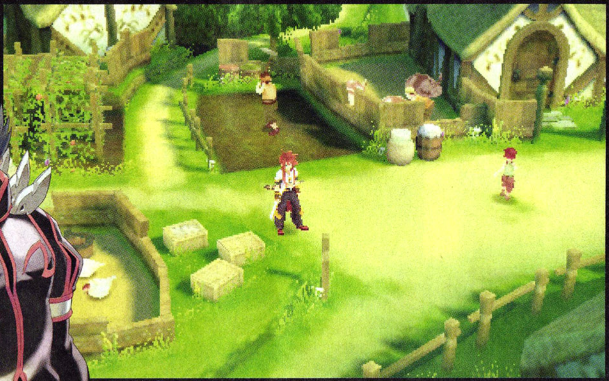


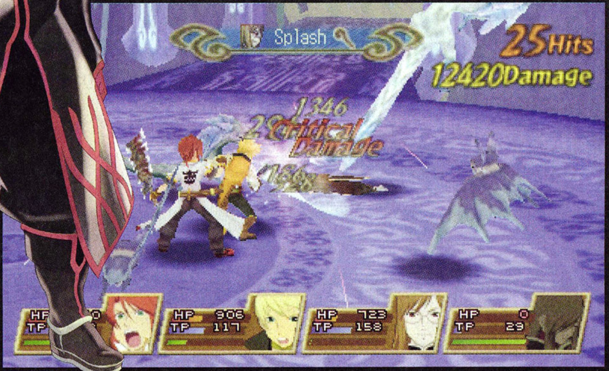


[Above] AR modes bring Tetris directly to your dining-room table.









TALES OF THE ABYSS

A tale worth retelling

WE'VE GOT SOME good news and some bad news, RPG fans. Let's get the bad news out of the way up front. Tales of the Abyss has been delayed. Rather than hitting this fall as was previously announced, it's now slated to arrive some time in the first quarter of 2012. The good news: after playing through the first few hours of the game, we're confident it'll be worth the wait.

Originally released as a PlayStation 2 title, Abyss remains a favorite among fans of Namco's long-running Tales series. Though I'm a newcomer to this particular installment, I can already see why. For starters, the game's oddball cast is pretty darned entertaining. Whereas most Japanese RPGs feature heroes who cheerfully encourage each other at every step, this not-so-merry band of travelers engages in frequent mockery and bickering. The result is a biting sense of humor that's atypical of the genre, and it's delivered through a strong localization and (mostly) solid voice work. That plays well against a fairly serious plot, which has its roots in a fascinating creation myth and offers loads of political intrigue. Things can get a bit confusing when characters start rattling off bizarre names and hard-to-follow jargon, but Luke, the game's amusingly clueless lead, is always there to empathize with the player.

Of course, the Tales franchise is perhaps best regarded for its action-heavy battle system that has as much in common with hack-and-slash games as it does with traditional RPGs. Abyss adds full 3D movement to the mix, as well as a host of new strategic options. You might be able to get by with simple button-mashing in the early going, but as your foes grow stronger, you'll need to work in tandem with your CPU allies and pay as much attention to defense as you do offense. Despite first appearing on PS2 almost five years ago, this battle system is still more engaging than those of most RPGs released in the interim. That said, I'm also a big proponent of how the series lets you see enemies coming beforehand so you can try to avoid conflict altogether when you so desire. (Random battles need to go the way of the dodo.)

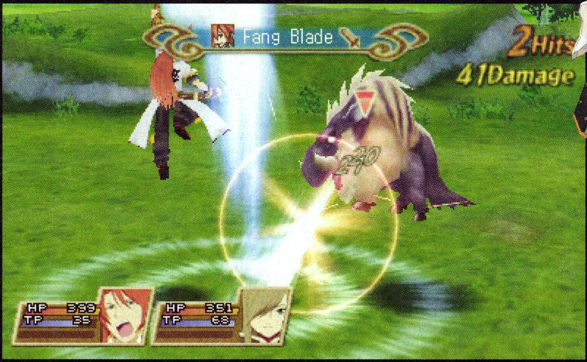
Even outside of combat, the dungeons in Abyss do a nice job of keeping the player engaged. Most are filled with puzzles that revolve around the abilities of your diminutive sidekick, Mieu. The little guy can spew fireballs when you first meet him, and he picks up additional skills—like limited flight—over the course of your journey. The puzzles never approach the complexity of, say, The Legend of Zelda's, but they break up the walk-fight-walk monotony that drags down many RPGs. Mieu is also fodder for some great slapstick comedy. While everyone else fawns over his stereotypical cuteness, Luke is rightfully annoyed by it and abuses the squeaky (yet surprisingly resilient) critter on a regular basis.

In terms of content, this version of Abyss doesn't offer anything new over the original. It does make some welcome improvements, however. First and foremost, the lengthy load times that plagued the PS2 disc are no longer a concern. Battles take only a second or two to get started, and there's no delay whatsoever when you enter a building or move to a new area. The frame rate is noticeably smoother, as well, especially on the world map. Then there's the addition of stereoscopic 3D, which not only adds some visual punch, but also makes it easier to judge spacing in combat. Though dedicated fans may lament the continued lack of voice during the optional conversation "skits," there's little doubt that this will prove the definitive English version of Tales of the Abyss. That could make it one of the best reasons to own a Nintendo 3DS next winter. As much as we'd love to have the final game sooner, good things come to those who wait. —STEVE T.

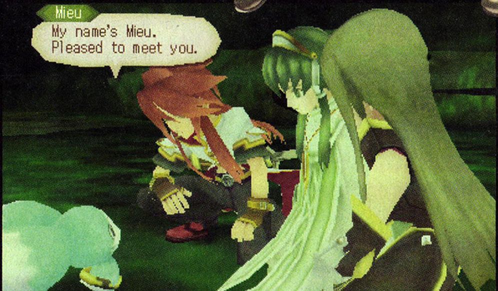
N3DS PUBLISHER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
DEVELOPER: **NAMCO TALES STUDIO**
RELEASE: **WINTER 2012**

Radiant Howl
26Hits
12921Damage

Impaling Heaven
18Hits
7053Damage



[Above] He may be a whiny, self-absorbed jerkstore, but Luke is pretty good with a blade. And isn't that really what matters?


Mieu
My name's Mieu.
Pleased to meet you.

Whether the bugs are small [left] or huge [below], your goal is the same: annihilate them all!

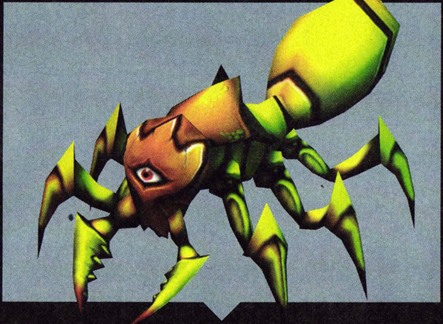
CENTIPEDE: INFESTATION

Know your bugs. Then blow them up.

IT'S OBVIOUS THAT the giant, segmented, multilegged centipede is the main baddie of Centipede: Infestation, but it's far from the only creepy-crawly critter that you'll encounter in this follow-up to the 1980 arcade hit. Sure, you'll be armed to the teeth with eight types of upgradeable weapons (including a flamethrower, a missile launcher, an electricity gun, and a laser) and you might have a buddy along for some co-op action, but you'll still have to go head to head with overwhelming swarms of massive, mutated garden pests. Here's a look at some of the vile insects and arachnids you'll have to defeat. —**CHRIS H.**

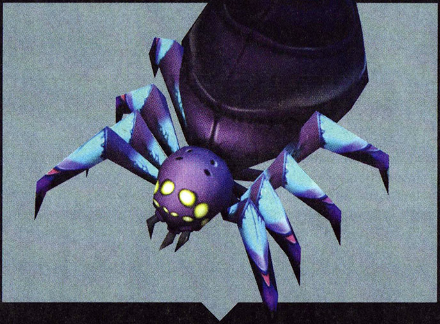
Wii N3DS

PUBLISHER: **ATARI**
DEVELOPER: **WAYFORWARD**
RELEASE: **NOVEMBER 2011**



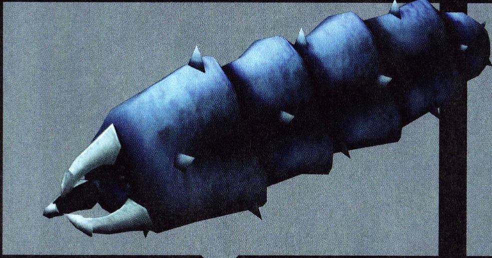
ANT

These cyclopean freaks look pretty nasty, but, like real ants, they'll sometimes just follow their trail and ignore you. When defeated, they may produce machine-gun spores, which will aid you in battle.



BOMB SPIDER

Some spiders in Centipede: Infestation help you by dropping weapons. The Bomb Spider, on the other hand, just charges at you and explodes if it gets close enough. Fortunately, if you defeat it, its explosion will likely destroy other enemies instead.



BURROW BUG

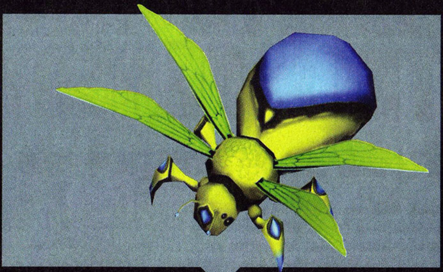
Burrow Bugs are tricky creatures that tunnels into the earth and attack you from below. By using your stomp move, you can make these bugs emerge and blow 'em away before they cause any damage. They may drop flame spores when defeated.

CATERPILLAR

The caterpillar is slow, but it's heavily armored and it spits toxic goo. If you don't destroy it, it'll create an indestructible cocoon and metamorphose into a web-shooting moth.

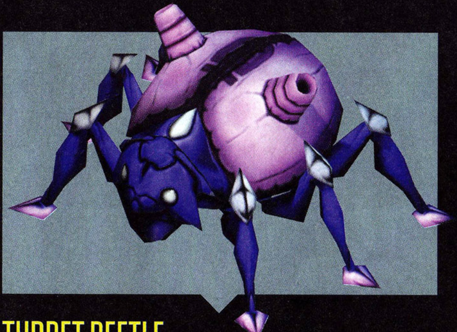
LEAP BUG

As its name implies, the Leap Bug moves by jumping at you. When in the air, this critter is almost impossible to hit.



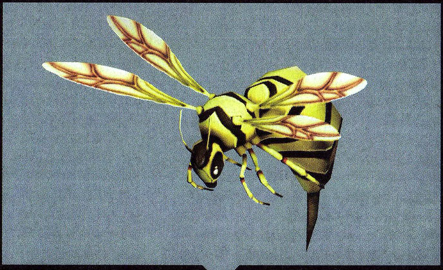
LIGHTNING BUG

Known for attacking in large groups, these flying foes possess electrical attacks. They sometimes drop electric spores upon defeat.



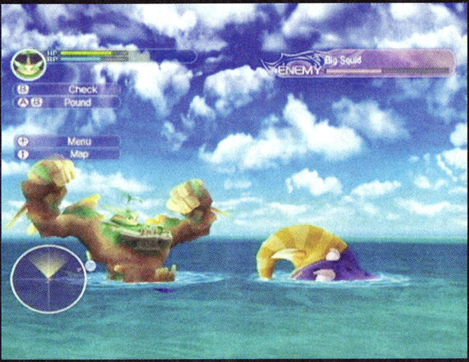
TURRET BEETLE

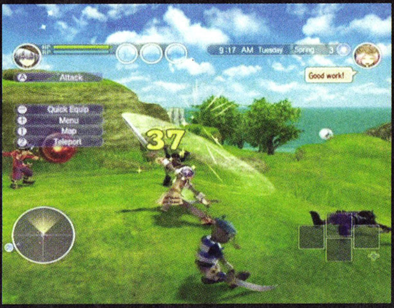
Possessing an armored shell, this bug boasts a high level of defense. It'll attempt to find a good position on the battlefield, then spread its wings and blast you with projectile attacks.



WASP

Just like real wasps, these guys have a nasty sting. They'll attack in swarms and attempt to stab you. When you defeat one, it may leave behind a laser spore.





[Left] There's nothing quite like patrolling the seas and fighting gargantuan monsters from atop your own golem.

2:48 PM Monday Spring 8
Quick Equip
Menu
Map
Teleport
Planting Point

RUNE FACTORY: TIDES OF DESTINY

Beyond distance. Beyond time. Beyond gender?

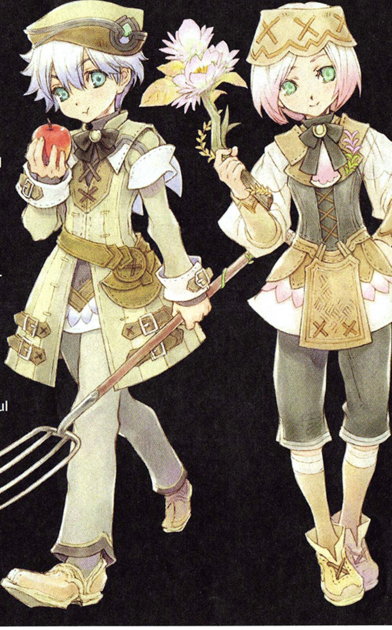
THINK YOUR SOCIAL life is complicated? Chances are you've got nothing on Aden, the hero of Natsume's Rune Factory: Tides of Destiny. Somehow the soul of his best friend, a girl named Sonja, has become trapped in his body—the two are quite literally inseparable. Talk about awkward. To make matters worse, the same mysterious incident that merged the two youths also sent them, apparently, several hundred years into the future. We're not talking spaceships and flying cars, but they're definitely no longer on the Fenith Island they knew; the geography and the populace have changed completely.

However, not all of Aden's luck is bad. One of the first things he does (or does Sonja make him do it?) while getting accustomed to his new temporal home is to plant a strange glowing seed in his backyard. The next morning the seed has sprouted, giving birth to a towering plant golem that's the size of a skyscraper! Recognizing Aden as its master, the golem—named Ymir—will obey Aden's every command. The ability to control the gargantuan creature is one of Tides of Destiny's core play mechanics; the golem will happily transport you across the vast ocean, allowing you to investigate suspicious areas and even raise entire islands from the watery depths.

On the islands, the action gets up close and personal. Using five types of weapons (dual blades, longswords, spears, katanas, and magic rods), you'll fight a vast assortment of monsters and endeavor to destroy the beasts' spawn points. (Alternatively, you can befriend creatures by using a magic brush.) There's loads of loot to be had, as well, which you can bring back to Fenith Island and use as materials for crafting stat-boosting accessories or as ingredients for cooking. Some islands even have spots for farming; by planting crops and assigning befriended monsters to tend to them, you can establish your own bustling produce business.

Of course, all the monster-slaying and golem-riding in the world probably won't help Aden get Sonja's soul out of his body—or will it? You'll have to play the game when it hits this fall to find out. —**CHRIS H.**

Wii **PUBLISHER: NATSUME**
DEVELOPER: NEVERLAND
RELEASE: SEPTEMBER 2011



Q

HOW MANY COLORS DOES YOSHI™ COME IN?

Q

WHICH NINTENDO HERO HAS KIDS?

Q

HOW MANY TIMES HAS BOWSER KIDNAPPED PRINCESS PEACH™?

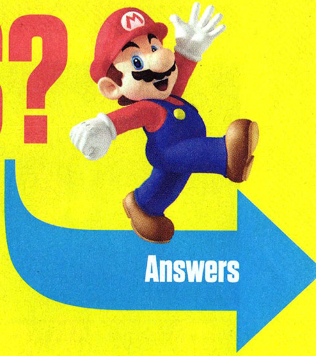
Q

WHO HAS A STARSHIP-PILOTING PIG AS AN ARCHENEMY?

Q

GOOMBAS: MUSHROOMS OR CHESTNUTS?

WHY DOES MARIO™ WEAR GLOVES?



Q

WHY IS MEGA MAN BLUE?

Q

WHY DOES FOX McCLOUD WEAR A RED SCARF?

Q

WHICH LEGEND OF ZELDA GAME DID ZELDA™ NOT APPEAR IN?

Q

WHAT'S UP WITH TINGLE?

Q

WHICH VIDEO GAME ICON HAS LOST WEIGHT?

Q

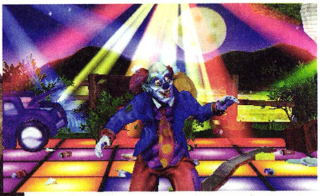
WHAT DOES THE WA IN WALUIGI™ MEAN?

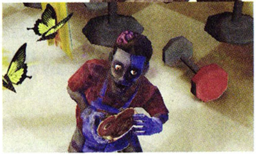
PET ZOMBIES

Who wants a brain treat?

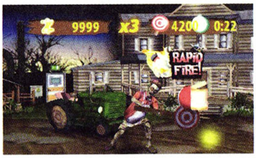
After suffering through an undead apocalypse, the citizens of the Pet Zombies universe have decided to make the best of it by turning former man into man's best friend. First you choose a stereotyped zombie that best matches your interests (jock, nerd, clown, granny, etc.), pick a name and some toys, and—presto!—you've got your very own undead companion to care for. Think Nintendogs, but with zombies and a comical overtone. Contrary to any fears you might have about adopting the walking dead, however, your new pal won't turn on you so long as you provide a steady supply of brains and affection, as well as a healthy helping of tough love (or as the game calls it, torture). You can also play games with your zombie, such as launching it in a giant slingshot much akin to the one in the Angry Birds games. —**CODY M.**

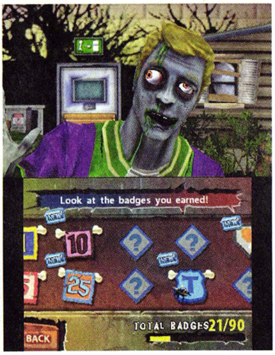
N3DS PUBLISHER: **MAJESCO**
DEVELOPER: **1ST PLAYABLE PRODUCTIONS**
RELEASE: **OCTOBER 2011**





[Below] Don't feel bad about throwing things at your zombies. They need discipline!



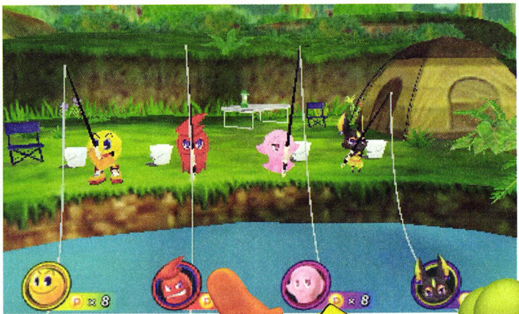


PAC-MAN PARTY 3D

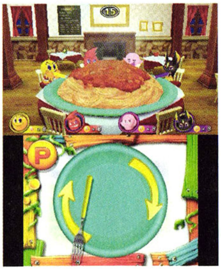
Round, yellow, and ready for a hootenanny

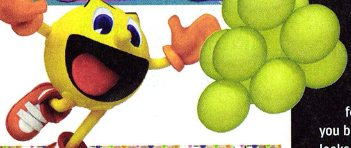
Following in the chomp-happy footsteps of its Wii cousin, the handheld version of Pac-Man Party is a minigame-centric board game starring one of pop culture's most recognizable icons. The Story mode is all about protecting a top-secret cookie recipe from would-be thieves, but face it—no one plays a party game for the plot; they play for the fast-paced multiplayer chaos. Fifty minigames are on offer for up to four players, providing a variety of challenges. For example, in Spaghetti Rollup you draw circles on the touch screen to wrap pasta around a fork; in Pac-Man Hustle you trace patterns to dance; in Doughnut Holes you launch your character from a cannon to perforate breakfast pastries; and in Haunted Pumpkins you blast enemies in a simple first-person shooter (which looks fantastic in 3D). Though every player needs his own game card to play the full multiplayer party mode, you can compete against other players in minigames via single-card download play or opt to battle CPU foes. —**CHRIS H.**

N3DS PUBLISHER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
DEVELOPER: **NAMCO BANDAI**
RELEASE: **WINTER 2011**

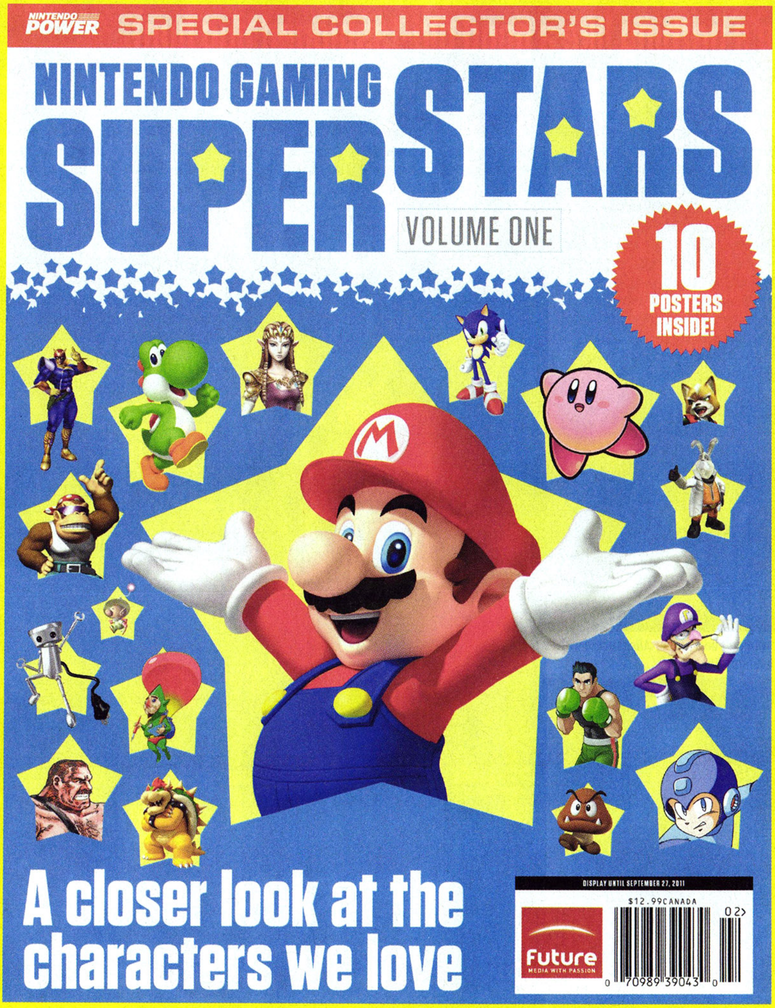


[Below] That's a big plate of spagetti. Good thing Pac-Man's always hungry.





EVERYTHING YOU WANT (*AND DON'T WANT*) TO KNOW ABOUT YOUR FAVORITE CHARACTERS!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ALIENS: INFESTATION

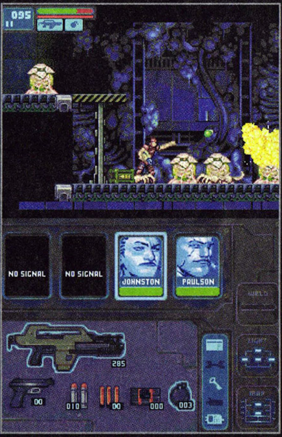
There's nothing like a good old-fashioned bug hunt.

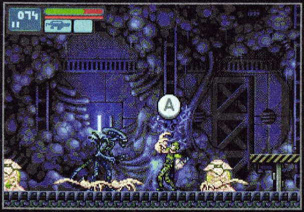
IN THE LATE '80s, the famous sci-fi author William Gibson wrote a script for *Alien 3* that never wound up getting filmed. You can find it on the Internet with a little careful searching, and someone involved with the development of Aliens: Infestation apparently did, because they used some of Gibson's story ideas for the game. In other words, the development team is hardcore. This game was made by people who are serious about some Aliens. They know how to make a fine side-scrolling adventure, too—there's a little Metroid here, a little Castlevania, a little old-school Ninja Turtles. For a good time, just add acid-blooded bugs.

The story begins after *Aliens* ended, with the troopship *Sulaco* adrift in space. A few familiar human survivors are onboard, but unfortunately, they have company. The player controls a four-man Colonial Marine squad sent to check out the situation, and that's where the action kicks off. There are human bad guys to battle at first (from the "Union of Progressive Peoples," one of Gibson's cutting-room concepts), and then...well, guess.

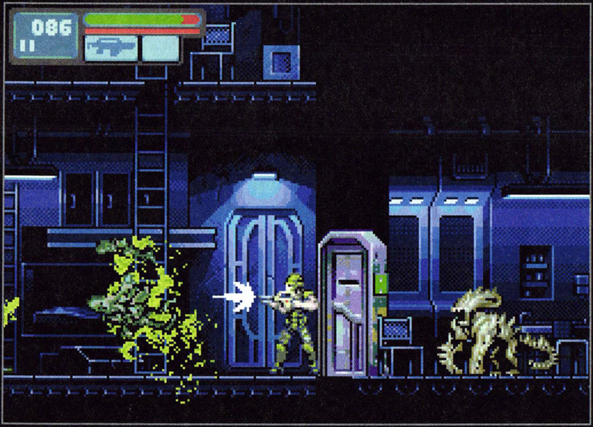
The *Sulaco*—and some other familiar places beyond it—form a big free-roaming world in the Metroid tradition, full of hidden areas to explore. Players control one Marine—the point man, so to speak—at any given time, while the other three wait in reserve. Save points scattered around the game world serve as hubs for switching characters, as well as healing damage, swapping weapons, and otherwise getting ready to go kill more bugs.

When a Marine dies in battle, he's actually dead. Gone. Not coming back. Luckily, other potential members of the squad have managed to survive and hole up here and there. Recruiting them fills the gaps and brings the team back to fighting strength. Of course, the best approach is to not get killed in the first





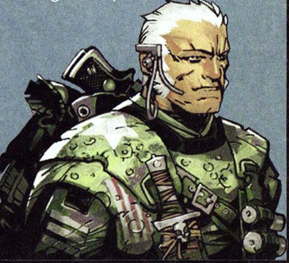
[Above] It wouldn't be a proper *Aliens* game without some face-hugging action.

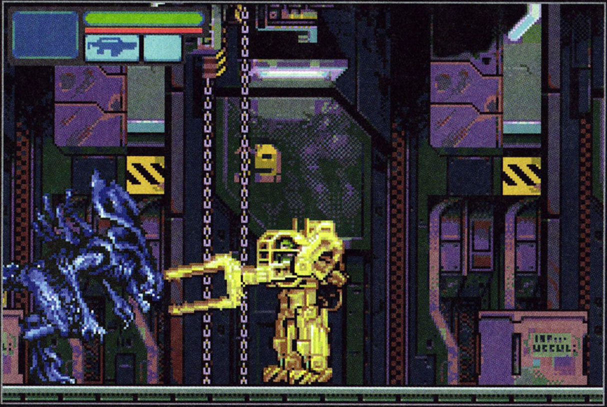


KNOW A SPACE MARINE

JOHN "DUKE" CAMERON

Chances are, he's the first Marine most players will get a handle on. Corporal Cameron, entry number one in the Infestation character catalog, is the leader of the four-man fire team that boards the *Sulaco* at the beginning of the game. The proof of a truly skilled player, of course, will be whether the corporal and his team get a chance to see the *end* of the story, hordes of marauding aliens later. With around 20 playable characters to unlock altogether, we get the feeling that WayForward expects us to suffer a few casualties along the way.





place, and the Marines have plenty of ways to stay alive. There's the good old M41 pulse rifle, complete with underbarrel grenade launcher. Corporal Hicks left his trusty shotgun lying around. Tools such as a motion tracker and a miniwelder come in handy for getting around and anticipating battles before they begin. The inventory and map systems are easy to use, thanks to a tabbed interface down on the DS touch screen.

When it comes to presentation, for weapons and everything else, WayForward has the details down pat. Sound effects are faithfully sampled from the movies—the pulse rifle's chatter, the alien screams, little music stings when something awful jumps out of the dark. Backgrounds like the distinctive Acheron landscape and the resinous goo of bug-infested tunnels give the world the right look. It's not just any sci-fi future; it's the place and time we know from the movies.

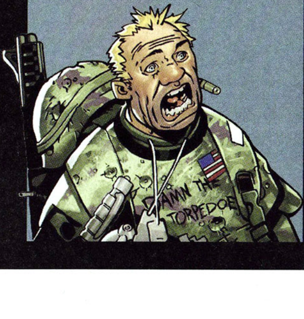
Keep in mind, though, that admiring the scenery too much is an excellent way to die. Our hands-on time suggests that Infestation's difficulty is just a bit unforgiving at the moment. Nintendo DS veterans may welcome the challenge, however, and it definitely isn't without some real rewards. —DAVID S.

DS **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
DEVELOPER: WAYFORWARD
RELEASE: OCTOBER 2011

KNOW A SPACE MARINE

DAVE "BBQ" WILLIAMS

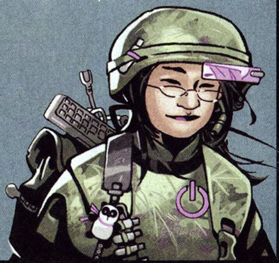
His nickname actually doesn't have any kind of double meaning. Contrary to the conditioning we've received from years of G.I. Joe cartoons, "BBQ" doesn't mean "the guy with the fire extinguisher." It actually means he smokes up a really good rack of ribs. This, in a roundabout way, is what landed him on the *Sulaco*. He had a cushy job as company cook until too many complaints about the quality of Corps food got him punted to a front-line outfit. In the future, as in the present, every Marine is a rifleman, whether he wants to be or not.

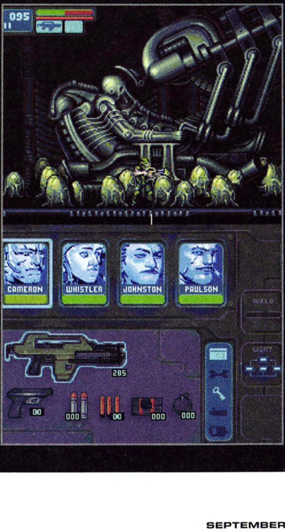


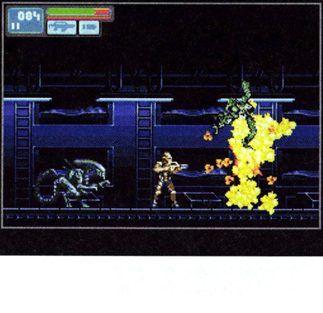
KNOW A SPACE MARINE

MEI-LIN "BETA" CHAU

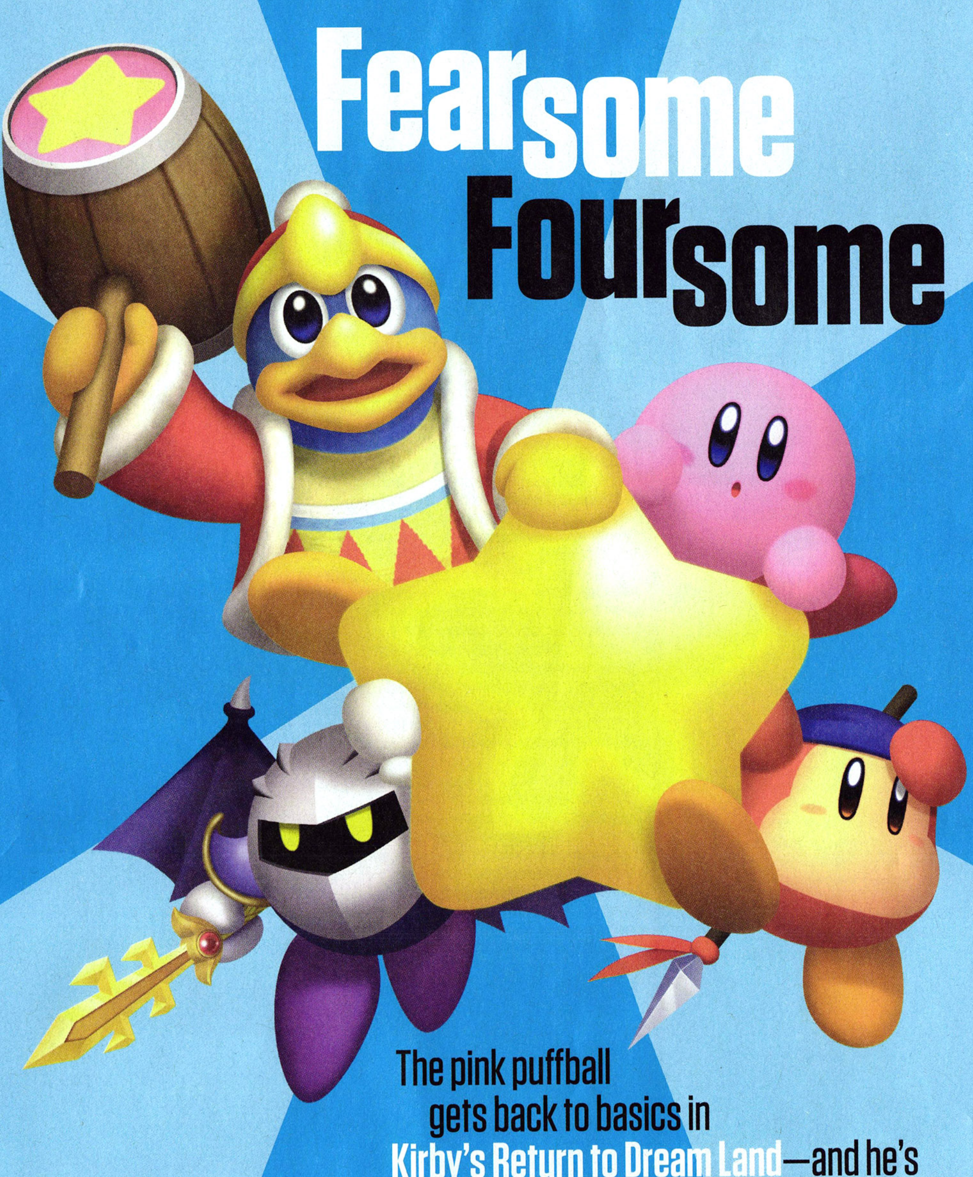
In the year 2179, it takes all kinds to make a Colonial Marine Corps. Gone are the days when massive upper-body strength was the defining characteristic of a Marine. PFC Chau is the bithead of her outfit—instead of some macho death's-head design all over her armor, she's got the on-off symbol from a 20th-century PC. Her specialty in the field is computer infiltration, and she'll do some of that on the mission, digging map information and other details out of the colony computer. But that doesn't mean she shouldn't keep her pulse rifle handy.







Fearsome Foursome

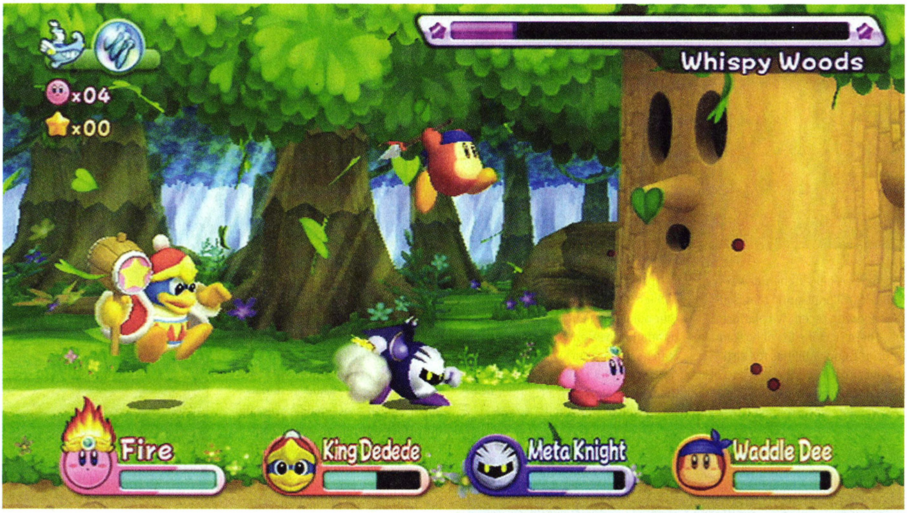


The pink puffball gets back to basics in **Kirby's Return to Dream Land**—and he's brought friends!

BY **CHRIS SLATE**

PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO** DEVELOPER: **HAL LABORATORY** RELEASE: **FALL 2011**

Wii



Kirby Super Star Ultra was a top-notch remake of a Kirby classic, and Kirby's Epic Yarn was a work of art, but for Kirby purists it's been a long five years without a new adventure in the series's traditional style. The wait will finally end this fall with the release of Kirby's Return to Dream Land for the Wii console, and judging by what we've played of the game so far, fans are in for some of the best enemy-gobbling, ability-copying action ever, with the most fabulous four-player platforming this side of New Super Mario Bros. Wii.

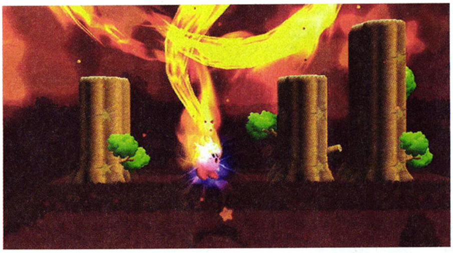
The adventure begins when an affable alien named Magolor crash-lands a ship called the *Lor Starcutter* on the peaceful Pop Star planet and its pieces are sent flying throughout Dream Land, Kirby's usual stomping grounds. Being the stand-up guy that he is, Kirby offers to help the strange visitor retrieve his missing parts so that he can rebuild the ship and be on his way. It's a fine setup for a classic-style Kirby adventure, but there's a twist: this time Kirby doesn't have to tackle his quest alone. Up to three other players can join in the fun as Kirby carbon copies or as series regulars Meta Knight, Waddle Dee, and King Dedede.

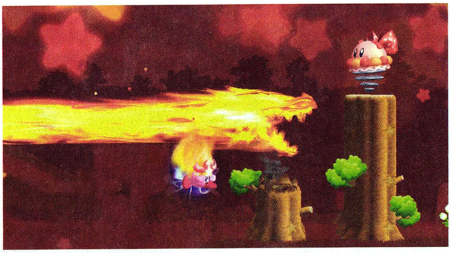
x10
x26
Leaf

The game's many stages present a wide variety of locales, such as forests, beaches, caves, and deserts, with action that takes place on land, underwater, in the air, and even in other dimensions. The levels are grouped into various worlds, each of which offers a ship part for beating a boss and has a cute-and-cuddly name like Cookie Country or Raisin Ruins. The worlds are accessible via a map screen similar to the ones used in most Super Mario games. The map is also where you can duck into the *Lor Starcutter* to chat with Magolor and tackle the Copy Ability Challenge Rooms (more on those later).

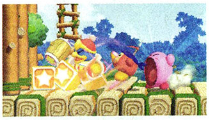
BACK TO BASICS

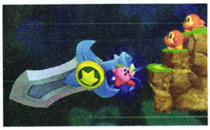
Stages are stuffed with vintage side-scrolling Kirby action that harks back to the series's roots. Pits are jumped or floated over, hazards are avoided, and enemies are sucked into Kirby's gaping maw so that he can swipe their powers. The controls are also in line with series tradition, as the Wii Remote





[Above] Super Abilities like Monster Flame can deal as much damage to the environment as it can to the bad guys.





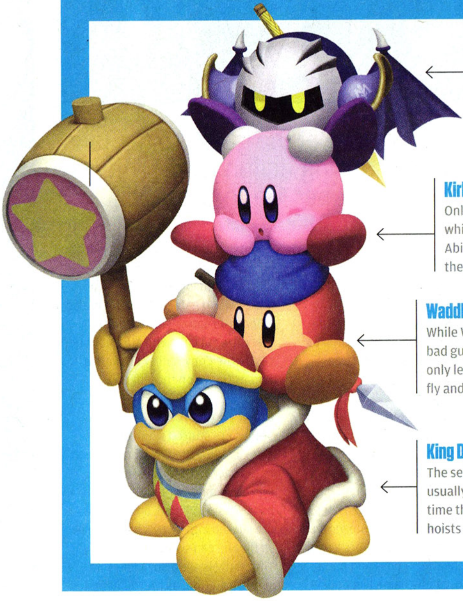
controller is held in the sideways NES-controller position that is all the rage with recent Wii platformers. There is a long list of new and returning Copy Abilities for Kirby to gain and use; we got to try 10 of them, including the new abilities Leaf (which can surround Kirby with a whirlwind of leaves) and Whip (which lets him lasso enemies). In our opinion, the best of the bunch is another new entry, Water, which can be used to surf waves, pound foes with liquid pillars, and even hold Kirby aloft with a continuous expulsion of spit. Similarly, every Copy Ability comes with a unique set of actions that pro players will learn to master in many ways. As in the Super Smash Bros. games, pressing the attack button can produce different results depending on which direction you're holding on the Control Pad or whether you're dashing, jumping, or standing idle. You can possess only one Copy Ability at a time, so there is a strategic element to deciding which one to keep. For example, you don't want to be Stone Kirby when you come across a life-restoring Maxim Tomato that is protected by a piece of rope that only Cutter Kirby can slice.

There are also Super Abilities, which power up Kirby to the max with the game's most devastating attacks. Monster Flame, for example, summons a giant fire monster to burn a path of destruction across the screen; Flare Beam generates a ball of energy that can be moved around the screen using the Control Pad; and Ultra Sword can obliterate enemies with wide razor-sharp swings. In addition to beating up on bad guys, Super Abilities can lay waste to objects that have stars on them—such as tall trees that block your path—which can open up other areas for exploration.

Wolfing down bad guys and playing with their powers is really easy to learn, but longtime fans will find plenty of depth to sink their teeth into—especially when those skills are put to the test in the Copy Ability Challenge Rooms. (Once again, we'll get to those later—we're building suspense!) Kirby's Return to Dream Land isn't a cakewalk like Kirby's Epic Yarn, in which it was literally impossible to die, but the game is being designed so that both series veterans and Kirby newcomers can enjoy it. The general difficulty is in line with Kirby's Dream Land for Game Boy and Kirby's Adventure for NES, depending on the number of players involved and how good they are.

Kirby & CO.

The cast of playable characters in Kirby's Return to Dream Land is composed of the series's most popular and enduring icons, and each of them offers unique abilities and different ways to play.



Meta Knight

While often at odds with his pink, round rival, Meta Knight fights alongside Kirby this time, lending his unmatched aerial abilities and crowd-clearing combat skills.

Kirby

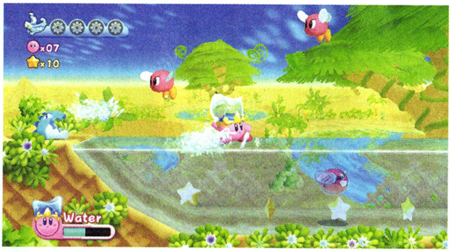
Only Kirby can inhale foes (and friends), which means that only he can use Copy Abilities and Super Abilities, making him the game's most versatile character.

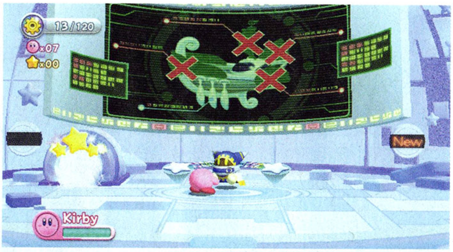
Waddle Dee

While Waddle Dee is usually the most basic bad guy in Kirby games (think of a Goomba, only less effective), the one in this game can fly and can attack from a distance.

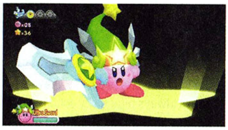
King Dedede

The self-proclaimed king of Dream Land usually plays Bowser to Kirby's Mario, but this time the powerful but slow-moving monarch hoists his heavy hammer for the good guys.





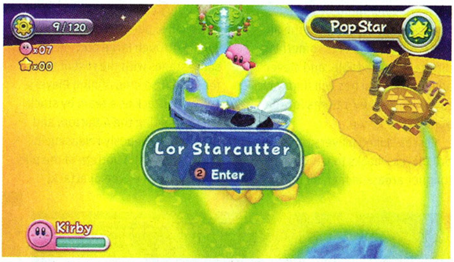
[Above and below] Kirby can check in with Magolor at the *Lor Starcutter*, which can be accessed via the same world map where all the worlds are located.

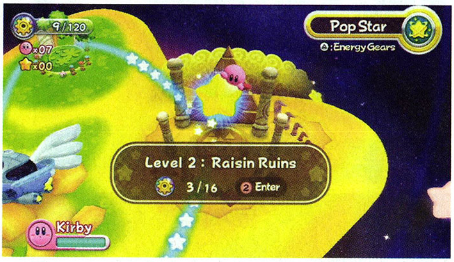


EVERY PUFFBALL NEEDS HIS PALS

Kirby's Return to Dream Land has been crafted to make the most of the multiplayer experience. There aren't any puzzles or other elements that require more than one person to get through, but those who experiment with different team strategies will find that involving more players adds a lot more depth. For example, you might have one person block the team from incoming attacks while players with long-range attacks fire back. In our play session, when my team passed through an area in which projectiles continuously rained down, the best strategy was for one of us to carry a protective umbrella-type dome that shielded the rest, who then had to defend the dome-carrier as our group moved forward in a tight formation.

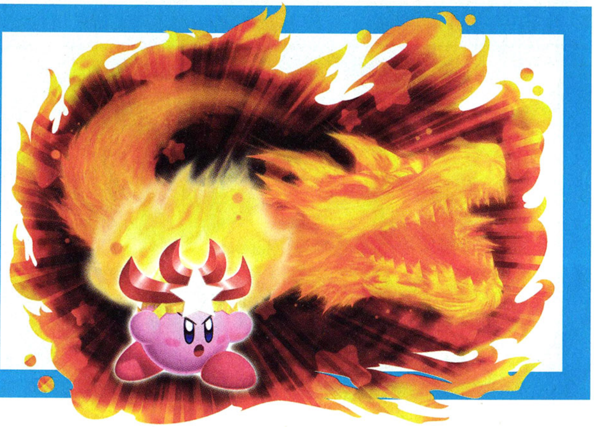
The real key to playing as a team is to make good use of each character's unique skill set. For example, if Kirby is low on health and the nearest food source is above and past some enemies, it might be smartest to send Waddle Dee to retrieve the food for Kirby since he can attack while flying, and is therefore at lower risk. Waddle Dee also has great long-distance attacks, while King Dedede has a hammer that can destroy special bricks found in various levels. Meta Knight is good





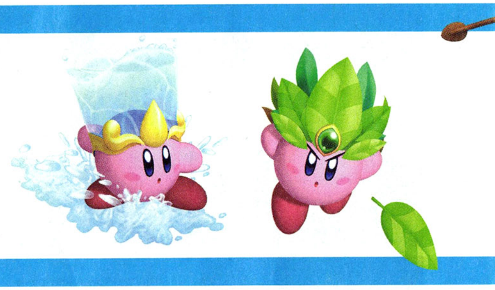
Super Abilties

When regular Copy Abilities aren't enough to get the job done, Kirby can sometimes turn to the less-common Super Abilities. Whether swinging a massive sword, steering a giant spark of energy, or siccing a flaming dragon on enemies, these uberattacks leave death and destruction in their wake.



Hat Tricks

Swallowing enemies allows Kirby to don some dapper headpieces, and doing so copies the ability of whoever he ate. From Bomb Kirby to Whip Kirby, each variation offers unique advantages and requires much practice to master. Kirby can also gain powers by eating special items, which continually respawn so that all the Kirbys on the team can get a bite.



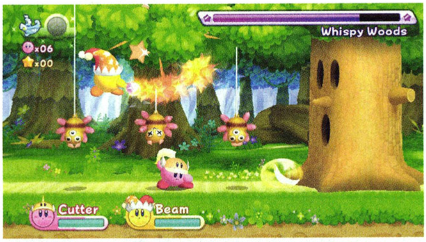
at clearing out multiple enemies at once, and he's lethal in the air. Each character brings something different to the table, and clever adventuring parties will find ways to maximize their talents for the good of the group.

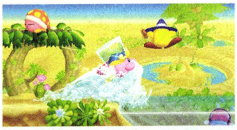
Lesser-skilled players can hop on pro players' backs to get through tougher areas—in fact, all four characters can stack on top of each other. An expert Meta Knight player can fly through large portions of some stages with the rest of the team riding on top of him! Players can also attack as a team by stacking up, holding the A Button, and then simultaneously releasing it. The player at the bottom of the pile determines the type of attack; a good choice can clear out multiple enemies. And if that isn't enough team bonding for you, players who grab more health than they need can share the extra energy with others in the most adorable way possible: by giving hugs.

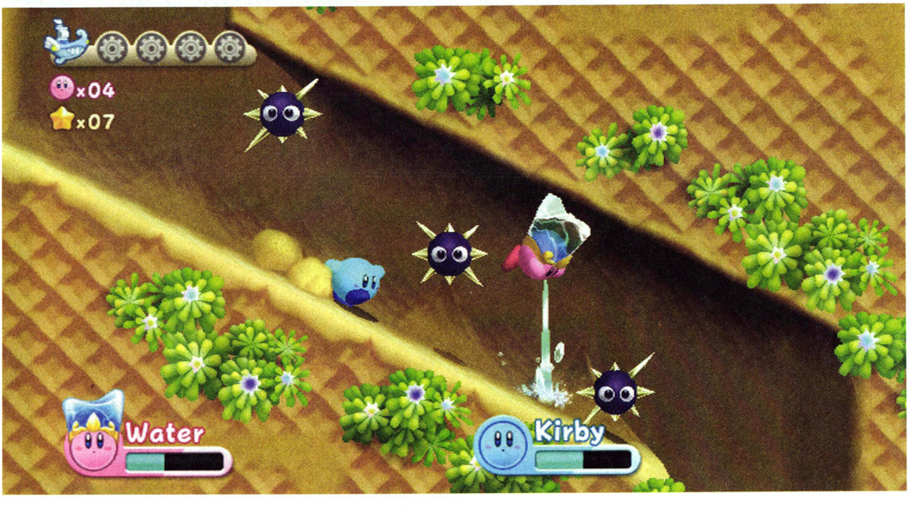
Friends can jump in and out of the game at will and change characters whenever they like without halting the first player's progress. Player one is always pink Kirby, who must be kept alive at all costs—if he dies, so does everyone else. The camera stays centered on him, and if any of his teammates are left behind off-screen, they are immediately zapped back to his side. Other players can choose to be copycat Kirbys of a different color—you can have four creampuffs running around if you want—but you can't double up on the other characters; there can only ever be one Meta Knight, Waddle Dee, or King Dedede at a time.

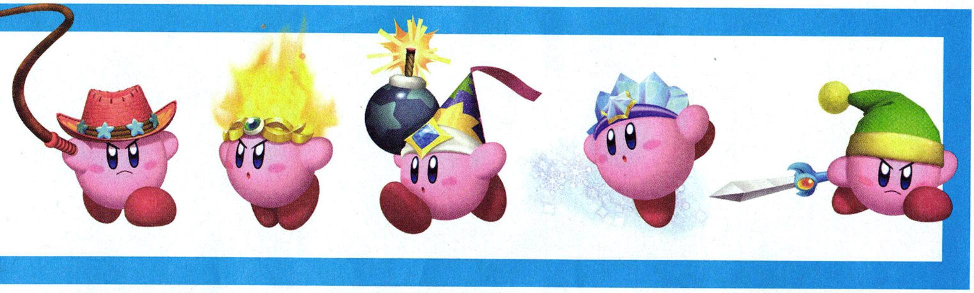
THINK YOU'RE ONE TOUGH CREAMPUFF?

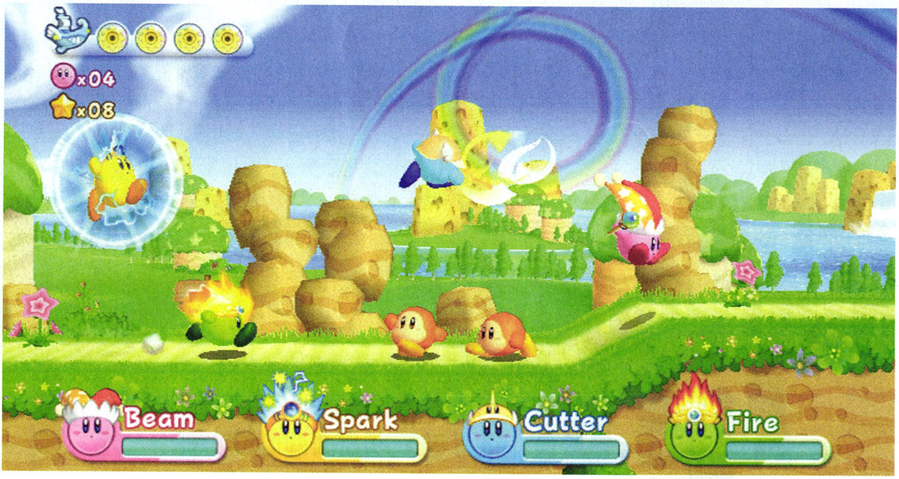
Now let's finally talk about those Copy Ability Challenge Rooms. This is the kind of stuff that serious gamers love to see: advanced tasks that



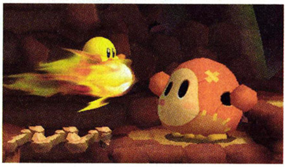








really test their mettle. There are seven of these rooms, and before you can enter one, you must unlock its door by finding and collecting the required number of Energy Spheres located throughout the stages of the main game. To succeed at these challenges, players need to demonstrate a deep understanding of each Copy Ability and a mastery of their many uses. Medals are awarded to those who do well; to earn a gold medal, you'll have to be fast, kill all of a room's enemies, avoid taking any damage, and search every nook and cranny for coins. All of this is possible only once you figure out exactly when to use each move to make the most of your time. Those striving to be the best will learn just how deep the gameplay can get; that each Copy Ability has different collision, grab, and pushback properties, similar to a fighting game. Even experienced players should expect to put in a good amount of time before acing these tests.



x07
x03
Flare Beam

EXPECT GREAT THINGS

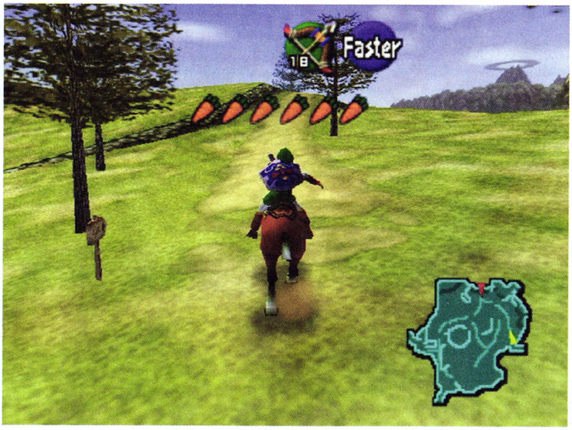
There is a lot in this game for longtime Kirby fans to love—including additional modes and features that Nintendo is keeping secret for now—and this title is also a great jumping-on point for those who aren't yet Kirby converts. Truth be told, I wasn't the biggest Kirby fan before I sat down to play Return to Dream Land, despite having enjoyed some of the puffball's previous adventures. But the game's masterful implementation of multiplayer sucked me right in, and I now count myself among the die-hard Kirby crowd. Any game that can please such a wide array of players has something special going for it, and I won't be surprised if Kirby's Return to Dream Land stands next to The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword as one of 2011's very best Wii games at year end.

POWER
MEMORY EXPANSION
NINTENDO 64
RESET

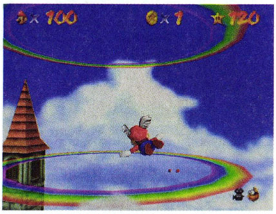
The Nintendo 64 Age of Innovation

Fifteen years ago the Nintendo 64 arrived—and gaming changed forever.

WHENEVER NINTENDO releases a new game system, a few things are pretty much assured: impressive new technology, awesome new games, and a whole lot of fun. But when the Nintendo 64 console arrived a decade and a half ago, it brought us more than that—it changed the way games were made and the way games were played. Side-scrolling 2D environments gave way to deeply immersive polygonal worlds, and solitary experiences were augmented by raucous social gatherings. Terms such as "analog control" and "camera manipulation" ingrained themselves in the everyday gaming lexicon. Fantasy became more fantastic and reality became more realistic. In short, gaming made a triumphant leap forward as the N64 established the blueprint for the modern era of video gaming—and, of course, iconic characters such as Mario, Link, Kirby, Pikachu, Captain Falcon, and Fox McCloud came along for the ride. To celebrate 15 years since the debut of the Nintendo 64, we take a look back at the ways the system (and its games) redefined interactive entertainment.



Return
30
9
06



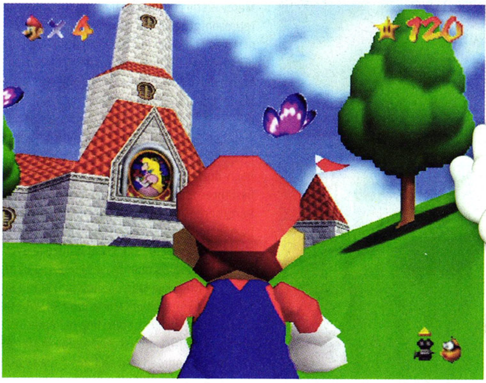
The three-dimensional worlds of Super Mario 64 opened up limitless new posibilities.

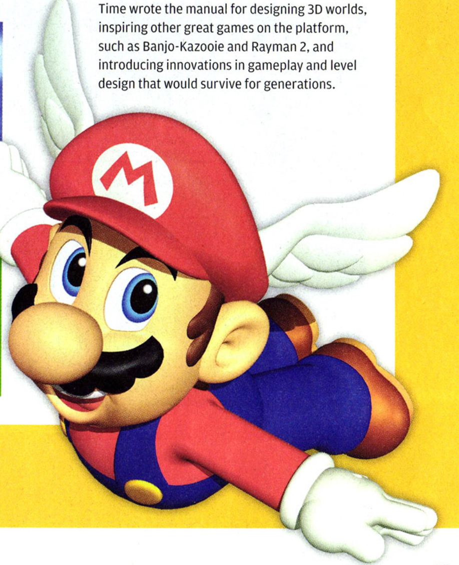
STEPPING INTO A POLYGONAL WORLD

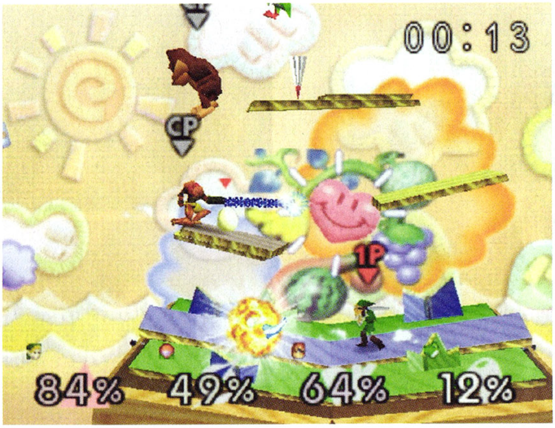
Admittedly, polygonal gaming existed before the Nintendo 64, but jaw-dropping first-party releases like N64 launch title Super Mario 64 set a new standard. Previous polygonal games were constrained to indoor hallways and warehouses or restricted to small environments such as fighting rings or racetracks. But here was Mario, scaling snowy peaks, swimming through underwater shipwrecks, and soaring over pyramids and desert-swept ruins. Gone were the goalposts and left-to-right level progression; this was a wide-open world of explorable environments and player-determined goals. And that was only the beginning: The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time upped the ante further with its sweeping fields, lakes, and forests that were so vast they were best traversed on horseback. Even traditional Zelda elements such as puzzles and boss battles benefited from the 3D worlds; groundbreaking design dictated you had to take the entire world into account, as clues (or foes) could be hidden overhead or underfoot.

This was the type of game that the Nintendo 64 had been built for, with hardware that excelled at hosting large, stable 3D environments. The system found plenty of success in other genres, but its free-roaming third-person action-adventure titles delivered the unique experiences that no other console could match, and they swept industry award after industry award, year after year.

Together, Super Mario 64 and Ocarina of Time wrote the manual for designing 3D worlds, inspiring other great games on the platform, such as Banjo-Kazooie and Rayman 2, and introducing innovations in gameplay and level design that would survive for generations.

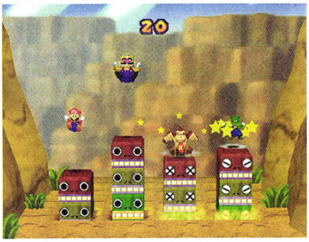






ATTITUDE
00:57
ATTITUDE

Multiplayer gaming took on a whole new life thanks to chaotic four-players games like Super Smash Bros. [left] and Mario Party 2 [below].

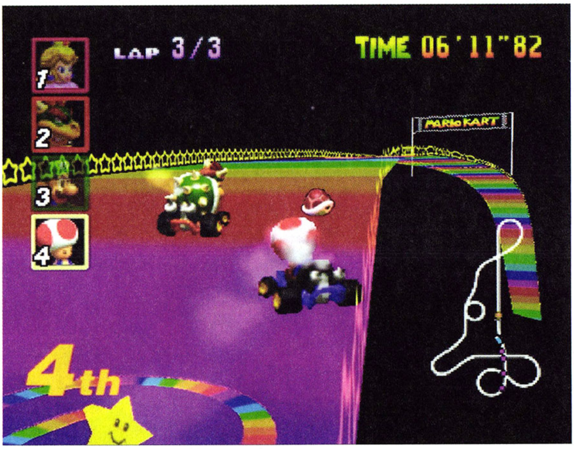


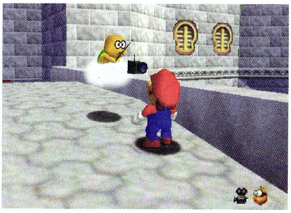
LIFE OF THE PARTY

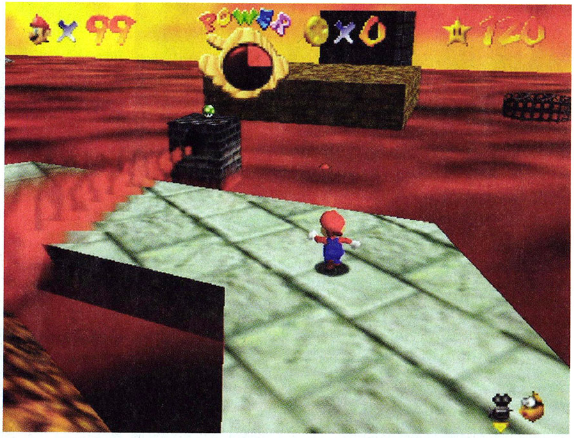
Take one glance at the Nintendo 64, and you can tell that the system was created with multiplayer action in mind. In a time when most video game systems featured two controller ports, the N64 had four inputs staring you right in the face. No extra accessories were required to accommodate a couch full of friends. Of course, those extra ports would be useless without a mess of games worth playing, but the N64 had no problems with that. A wide variety of multiplayer titles ensured that the console was a true party machine.

Arguably the most fondly remembered multiplayer game on the system is the classic first-person shooter GoldenEye 007. In addition to the excellent single-player campaign, GoldenEye featured a robust four-player mode with five different game types and more than 30 playable characters. It wasn't the only FPS to make a splash, though. Trigger-happy players could also frag their friends in Perfect Dark and Turok 2: Seeds of Evil. If you preferred a more hands-on approach to fighting, you were covered: the N64 was home to some of the best wrestling games of all time. WWF No Mercy is still considered by many to be the finest representation of the sport, and multiplayer matches could get incredibly heated. And let's not forget that the Super Smash Bros. series began here. With combatants as diverse as Mario, Link, and Pikachu, how could it not be the perfect game for pummeling your pals?

Those who wanted their competition a little less violent (but no less fierce) could always party down with Mario and company in the first three entries in the long-running Mario Party series. Their minigame-fueled mayhem helped define the modern video board game. Mario continued to have great influence over the N64 console's multiplayer lineup, starring in sports titles like Mario Tennis and Mario Golf, and also in the seminal Mario Kart 64. Whether players were racing or bursting balloons in Battle mode, the split-screen action in Mario Kart 64 guaranteed that all four of the system's controller ports were always in use.







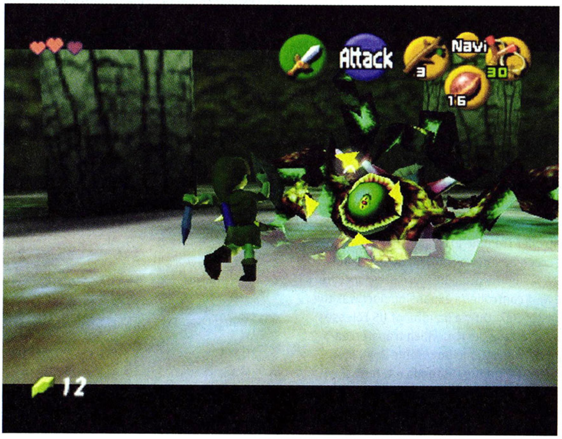
A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE

In a 3D world, if you turn Mario to the right, what should happen? Should the camera turn to show what Mario is now looking at? Or should it stay locked, assuming that the player is turning to avoid an enemy or move around an obstacle? While the first generation of 3D consoles provided new opportunities to game designers, it also brought new headaches, and none were more painful than the problem of what to do about the camera in third-person action games.

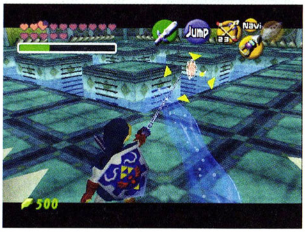
With no past games upon which to base their work, the team behind Super Mario 64 was forced to invent the free-moving camera from scratch. The game featured two camera modes, one that automatically adjusted the camera based on level geography and Mario's previous actions, and one in which players could lock the camera behind Mario to make it directly follow his movements. By allowing players to quickly switch between these modes, as well as move or lock the camera at will, the team created the first third-person action-adventure game in which players had the freedom to look in any direction without having to devote their energy to micromanaging the game's perspective.

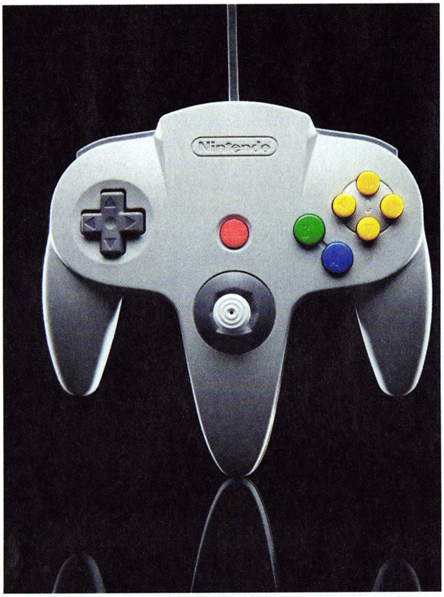
Super Mario 64 was a major breakthrough in its day, but it was only the first step in the long evolution of camera controls. While adequate for exploration and simple actions like jumping and rolling, the Super Mario 64 camera controls couldn't provide the accuracy necessary for more-complicated interaction. That problem was solved in The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time, which introduced the concept of Z-Button targeting—players could lock onto an enemy or object in the environment, and then move in relation to it, allowing for accurate directional sword strikes and defensive rolls. As with the camera innovations in Super Mario 64, this simple yet brilliant idea was quickly copied by developers throughout the industry, and remains ones of the most useful and intuitive tools in a camera programmer's arsenal.

The attention that Nintendo lavished upon the unsexy art of camera design allowed the company to leapfrog their rivals in bringing new styles of gameplay into the 3D generation.

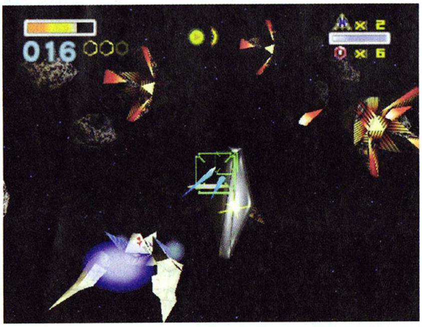


The Z-Button targeting system in The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time may seem like a no-brainer now, but it was a revelation in 1998.





With its three prongs, the Nintendo 64 controller admittedly looks a bit strange. But when it comes to controlling the action, it's got it where it counts.



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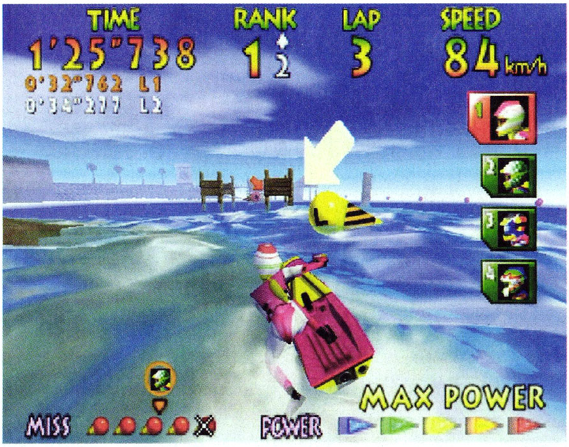
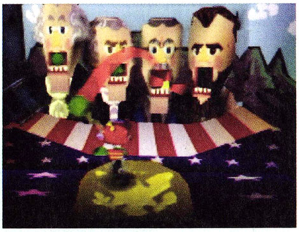
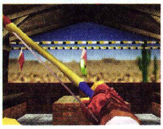
TAKING CONTROL

The Nintendo 64 may not have been the first video game system to offer analog control (the Atari 5200 and Vectrex, both from 1982, beat it), but it's certainly the system that brought this type of control—which was perfect for three-dimensional games—into the mainstream. The N64 controller's unique design looked a bit odd at first, but players quickly discovered that it was perfect for games that were designed to take advantage of it. Moving a character like Mario through 3D space worked exceptionally well with the controller's analog Control Stick, and the C Buttons provided a clever way to manipulate in-game cameras. The Z trigger, located on the back of the controller's central prong, made every shot in GoldenEye 007 feel like it was really being fired from a gun, and it made targeting enemies a breeze in The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time.

In addition to the standard buttons, Control Stick, and Control Pad, the Nintendo 64 controller contained an expansion port on its underside. Originally this port was used to house the N64 Controller Pak, which acted as a memory card for games that lacked an internal battery. However, it soon became known as the slot where players plugged in the Rumble Pak. This accessory, which was first packed with Star Fox 64, provided force feedback in select games by vibrating the controller at certain times. It may seem common today, but having a controller tremble in response to a game's onscreen action was quite innovative in 1997. A slightly more obscure accessory for the N64 controller's expansion port was the Transfer Pak. Only a handful of US releases supported the device, which transferred data between Game Boy/Game Boy Color cartridges and the Nintendo 64. It was primarily used by Pokémon fans who wished to import their captured critters to battle in the Pokémon Stadium titles.







REALITY CHECK

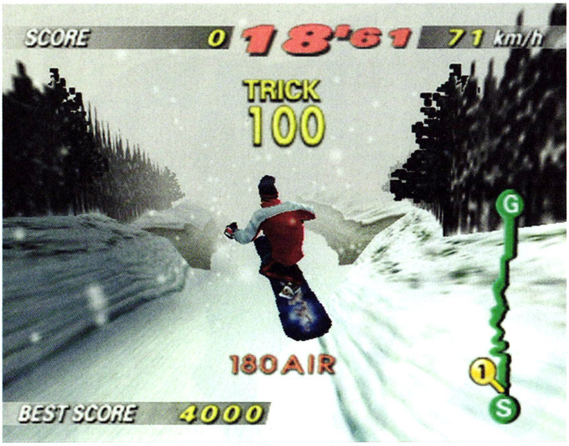
The Nintendo 64 went by the codename Project Reality. Sure, that was some show-offy marketing, but there was truth to it. The N64 brought a new kind of realistic feel to games—even ones that weren't about reality at all.

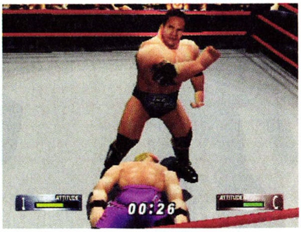
Games have had their own kind of physics forever. Super Mario Bros. runs on simple laws of gravity and motion—Mario jumps so high, falls so fast, floats like so. It wasn't until the N64 generation, though, that console games began to feature realistic physics. Those laws of motion grew more complex, until they finally felt a lot like the real ones.

Wave Race 64 began as a physics experiment: could the system simulate the behavior of real water? Turns out it could, and that made the foundation for a great racing game. 1080° Snowboarding did the same thing with snow and ice, while Pilotwings 64 took real-world physics to the sky.

As time went on, designers learned how to throw just enough reality in the mix; Excitebike 64 offered a fine-tuned combination of realistic bike behavior and arcade-style fun. Real physics played a role in games of pure fantasy, too. When Link shot an arrow or tossed a bomb in the Legend of Zelda games, gravity and momentum now came into play. Third-party developer Sucker Punch designed its cartoon platformer Rocket: Robot on Wheels around a detailed object-physics system, letting players grab almost anything in the game world and build their own solutions to complex, Rube Goldberg-style puzzles.

Alongside realistic physics came realistic presentation: the art of mimicking something real with the details of a game's graphics and sound. Sports simulations and racing games took big steps here, but the best example was in professional wrestling. Seriously—pro grappling made some massive leaps on the N64. Games like WWF WrestleMania 2000 used careful camera work, special effects, and refined animation to mimic the Monday-night TV experience. "Real" sport or no, it went a long way toward looking true to life.



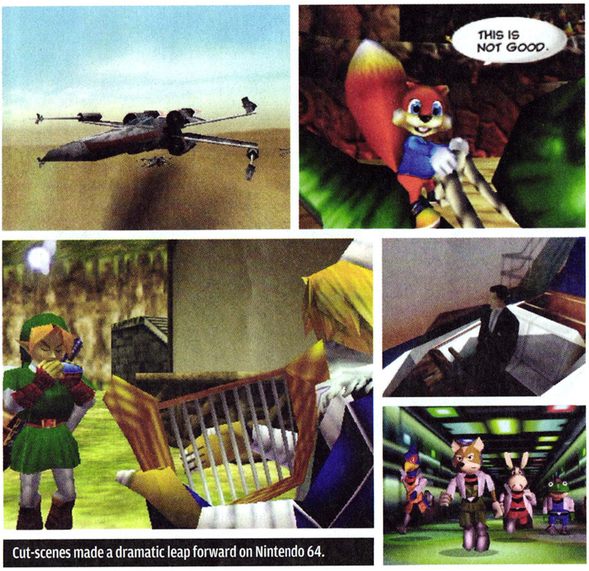


A CINEMATIC APPROACH

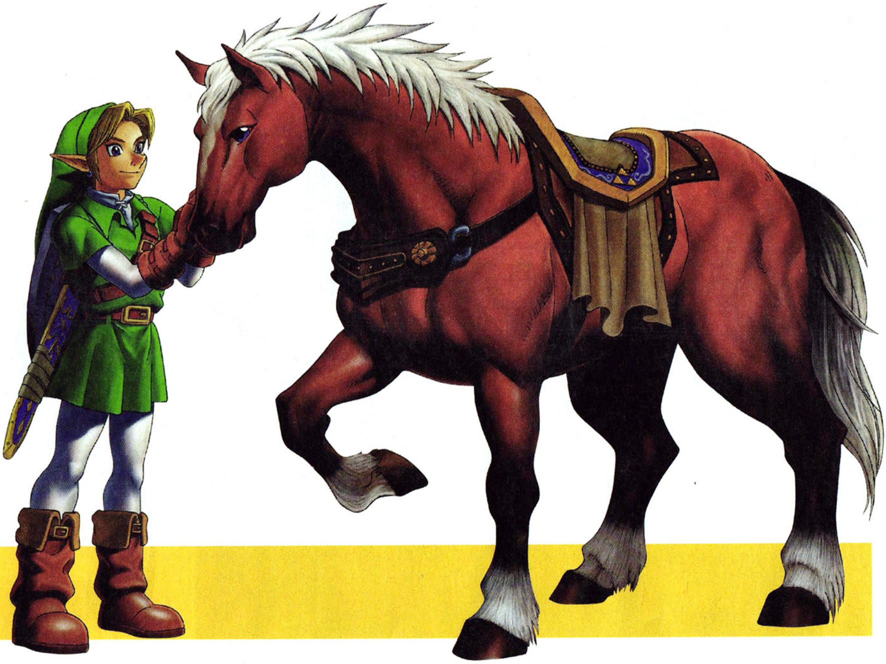
The English word "cinema" comes from the French word for "camera," which in turn comes from the Greek word for "movement." From the beginning, the Nintendo 64 untethered the player's perspective, letting us see a 3D world from every angle.

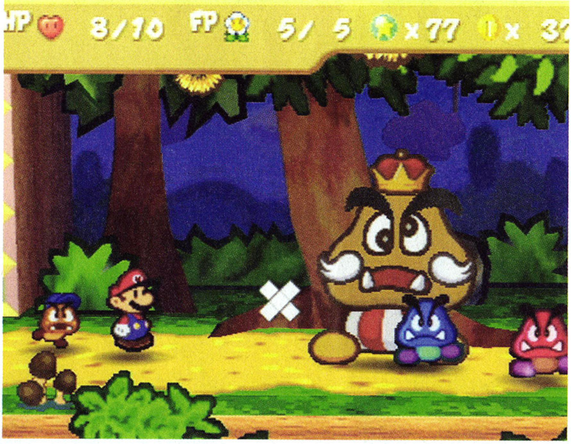
Different games went cinematic in different ways. *Star Wars* came to polygonal life in games like Rogue Squadron and Shadows of the Empire, adapting classic moments from the theater into something we could play and become a part of. GoldenEye 007 showed an action movie unfolding through the eyes of the hero. Monstrously raunchy voice acting and cut-scenes made Conker's Bad Fur Day one of the funniest titles we've ever played.

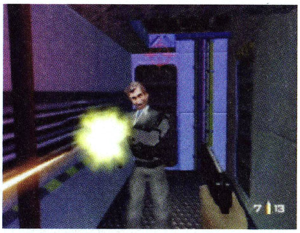
In other games, the cinematic influence was more subtle. Ocarina of Time used sweeping camera shifts to hint at the way through puzzles and dungeons. Each time Link unlocked a new pathway or discovered a chest, the camera would suggest a way to get from where he stood to where he needed to go, instead of simply serving up a hard cut from one bit of the game world to another. It's a gentle bit of navigation assistance, but a very important one, and it wouldn't work without cinematic techniques.

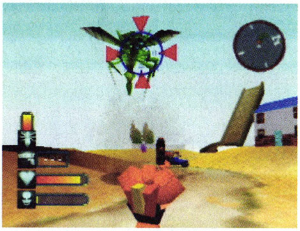


Cut-scenes made a dramatic leap forward on Nintendo 64.









IN WITH THE NEW

The leap to 3D was the biggest sea change in gaming history. Familiar franchises were nothing like they used to be, and soon they were joined by completely new names and new gaming experiences.

In 2011 a first-person shooter isn't anything very special. In 1997, though, Turok: Dinosaur Hunter blew gamers away, becoming the first fully polygonal FPS to make a big splash on a console. The Nintendo 64 went on to dominate the genre until the release of Halo on Xbox, a generation later. Turok, of course, wasn't the game that did most of the dominating. That honor goes to GoldenEye 007, *the* console shooter for a solid four years running. Nothing else—not even its own almost-sequel, Perfect Dark—could match it for cinematic feel and deathmatch action. While GoldenEye ruled the FPS field, lesser-known N64 games helped to define other genres. Body Harvest was a pioneer in open-world 3D action. Coming from the outfit we now call Rockstar North, you could call it the grandfather to Grand Theft Auto III. Jet Force Gemini was another glimpse of the future, a look ahead to the next generation's furious 3D shooters.

A few games still stand in their own little 3D niche. Blast Corps made a quirky brew out of action, puzzles, and gigantic explosions; photography game Pokémon Snap would likely have been pretty dull in 2D, but in a polygonal world it made for one of the most engaging Pokémon experiences.

With the dawn of the 3D era, two-dimensional gameplay and graphics took a little time off. Soon, though, designers and artists found a way to make the old and the new work together. The unique visual style of Paper Mario dropped classic 2D characters in a new-school 3D world. Diving headlong into the future took the Nintendo 64 into some fascinating places, but there's something to be said for hanging on to some memorable pieces of the past.

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BSAA
Bioterrorism Security Assessment Alliance
BSAA

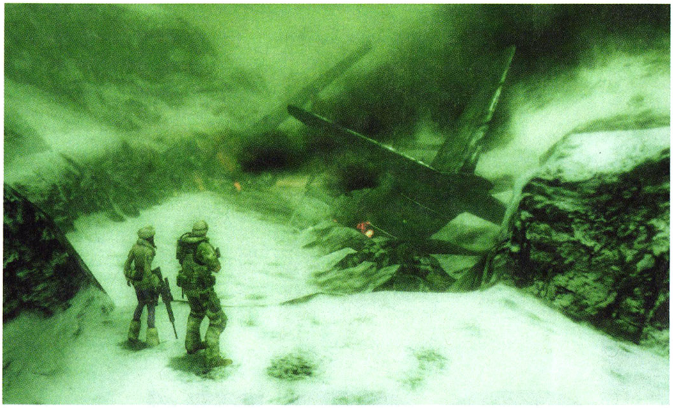
BY **JUSTIN CHENG**

PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM** DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM** RELEASE: **2012**

N3DS

Fear runs cold

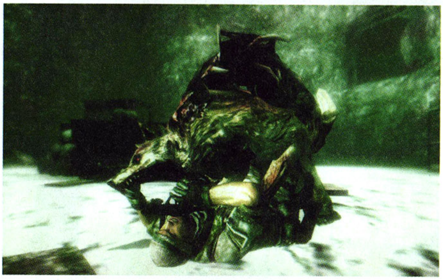
Chris Redfield jumps back into the action in *Resident Evil: Revelations* for Nintendo 3DS.

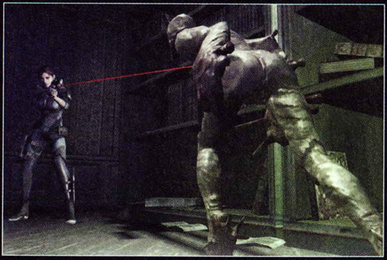


WITHOUT A DOUBT, all-ages titles are the cornerstones of the Nintendo experience. But one Mature-rated franchise has found success on Nintendo platforms time and again: Resident Evil. Whether it's the original Resident Evil remake, Resident Evil Zero, Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles, Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles, or Resident Evil: The Mercenaries 3D, a Nintendo-system-owning audience has a craving for the kind of survival-horror experience that only Capcom can provide. And now Nintendo 3DS owners will be able to play Resident Evil: Revelations, "the first survival-horror and traditional RE game developed from the ground up for a handheld system," producer Masachika Kawata tells us.

The exclusivity factor is certainly cool, and it means the development team can devote its resources to making the best possible product for the autostereoscopic handheld. The results are already astounding—this is easily one of the most visually impressive N3DS games we've seen so far. But beyond its technical achievements, Revelations is exciting because it's a full-fledged Resident Evil title that helps fill in some gaps in the series's timeline. Taking place between Resident Evils 4 and 5, Revelations explores the early days of the Bioterrorism Security Assessment Alliance (BSAA), a Bio-Organic Weapon (BOW)-hunting group that was introduced in Resident Evil 5. Longtime series protagonists Chris Redfield and Jill Valentine are back, doing what they do best (shooting baddies)—but they won't be working together. As we mentioned in last issue's preview, Jill has a new partner named Parker, a soldier Kawata describes as "a reliable guy in the battle situations and... very popular among his colleagues, with his likable personality." In the impressive demo we played back at this year's E3 Expo, Jill and Parker were trapped on a luxury ocean liner that felt less like the pre-iceberg *Titanic* than like the mansion from the first Resident Evil. This harking back to the beginning jibes with Kawata's goal for this game: eschewing the action-horror of Resident Evils 4 and 5 and, as Kawata says, "going back to the classic survival-horror game, where the player can experience the fear and the thrill of fighting against the scary creatures with limited ammo."

The reason Jill and Parker boarded this monster-infested (see the "New Nightmares" sidebar) ship in the first place was to search for Chris. Too bad for them that it was all a trap set by a mysterious new antagonist. As we discovered when we played a new demo, Chris was actually in a snow-covered moun-



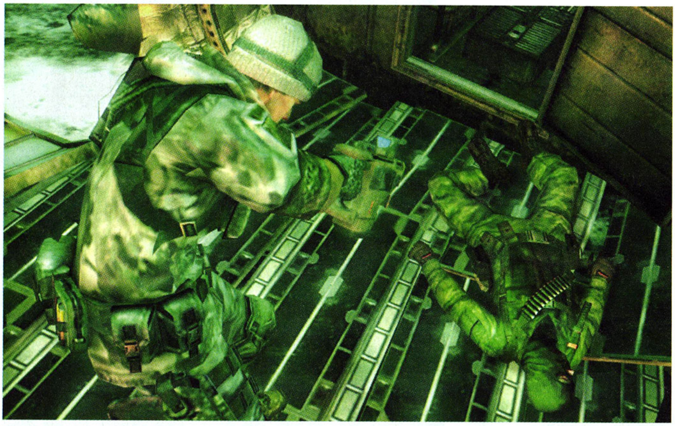


NEW NIGHTMARES

Zombies and not-zombie ganados/majini have become staples of the Resident Evil experience, but Revelations introduces water-based monsters that can slice, dice, and explode. Their exact origins have yet to be revealed, but they are infected with a new virus called T-Abyss. Producer Masachika Kawata tells us that water was a central theme during the early stages of development—which is appropriate given the nautical setting Jill and Parker find themselves in—and he goes on to say that "the enemy has the same characteristics as the form of liquid." Consider that the next time you reach for a drink.

tain range somewhere in Europe, accompanied by his new (and Parker's old) partner: a sniper-rifle-wielding, fashion-conscious young woman named Jessica. Kawata says Jessica "is not only a pretty face but also has a good brain." However, the only thing that comes across when we first meet her is whininess, as she complains that Chris needs to slow down because her feet hurt. As Chris, you have little choice but to ignore her complaints and march onward—until you see a damaged plane roar overhead before it crashes farther along the path you're on. Chris and Jessica rush over to the crash site, where they find traces of some sort of virus among the flaming wreckage.

Eventually, the two find what remains of the front section of the plane, open the door to the cockpit, and discover a dead pilot, who falls to the ground. At this point the game instructs you to equip the Genesis scanner, a device that is used to uncover hidden objects. First you equip the scanner by pressing up on the Control Pad or by



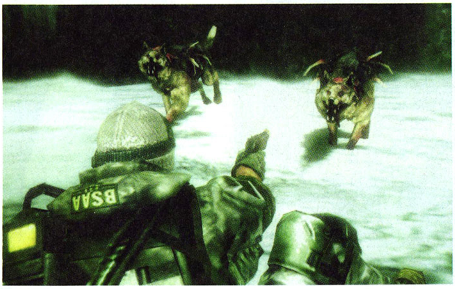
With his handy-dandy Genesis scanner, Chris can find hidden items such as green herbs, ammo, and flight manifests.

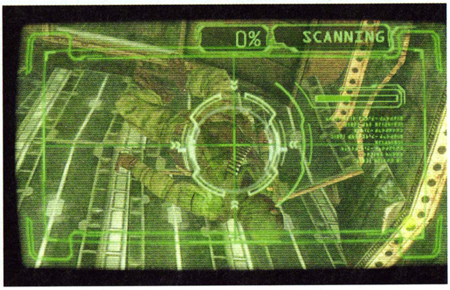
tapping on the Genesis scanner icon on the touch screen. You then use the scanner much as you would a gun in The Mercenaries 3D; you hold R to enter targeting mode, aim the reticle with the Circle Pad, and press Y once you've found your target. In this case, the scanner is used to find the flight manifest on the pilot's body, but Kawata notes that the scanner can also be used to find hidden ammo and health-recovery items. The flight manifest tells Chris and Jessica that the plane was headed for Valkoinen Mökki airport, which becomes the BSAA agents' new destination. Luckily for the footsore Jessica, the airport isn't far, and Chris knows of a shortcut through a nearby mine.

ENEMY MINE

"This cave is too cold," Jessica grumbles as they enter the mine. Chris's response? "You should've worn your thermal underwear." Soon after this exchange, they encounter their first enemies: zombified wolves. "See? This is why I like Chihuahuas!" Jessica quips as the wolves begin to attack. Naturally, Chris and Jessica are well prepared for this sort of thing. Aside from his Genesis scanner—a less-than-helpful gadget in a fight—Chris has a pistol and a shotgun in his arsenal. You equip a firearm by pressing right on the Control Pad or by tapping its icon on the touch screen. Once you're armed, the control scheme is mostly unchanged from that of The Mercenaries 3D—you still aim and shoot from the first-person perspective, you can still strafe by holding L while in the targeting mode, and you can still use a health-replenishing green herb at any time by tapping A.

Revelations does add one new





A History of Evil

As this timeline illustrates, what started as a simple rescue mission set off a chain reaction that would expose the evil agenda of a multinational corporation, wipe an entire city off the face of the Earth, and turn thousands of ordinary people into mindless puppets. —**KENNY M.**

1968

The Umbrella Pharmaceutical Corporation is founded by Ozwell E. Spencer, Edward Ashford, and Dr. James Marcus. ***(Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles)***

1997

Billy Coen's Marine squadron is ordered to murder the members of a civilian village in Africa. When the unit is brought back to the U.S., the soldiers are convicted of murdering 23 people and are sentenced to death. ***(Resident Evil 0)***

July 23, 1998

STARS (Special Tactics and Rescue Service) Bravo Team is sent into the Arklay Mountains to investigate a series of bizarre murder cases in the vicinity. Rebecca Chambers, the team medic and the newest member of STARS, is separated from the rest of Bravo Team when she boards a train transporting an escaped convict named Billy Coen. ***(Resident Evil 0)***

July 24, 1998

STARS Alpha Team is sent into the Arklay Mountains, situated on the outskirts of Raccoon City, to locate Bravo Team, with whom they have lost contact. Alpha Team is attacked by undead dogs while examining Bravo Team's downed chopper, and the surviving members—Albert Wesker, Barry Burton, Chris Redfield, and Jill Valentine—are forced into the Spencer mansion. ***(Resident Evil)***

August 24, 1998

Chris Redfield leaves for Europe to continue the fight against Umbrella. ***(Resident Evil: The Umbrella Chronicles)***

September 28, 1998

Jill Valentine tries to flee Raccoon City not only to save her life, but also to meet up with Chris in Europe. However, she is cut off by Nemesis and ends up partnering with Carlos Oliveira, an Umbrella Corp. soldier supposedly sent to save the citizens of Raccoon City. ***(Resident Evil 3)***

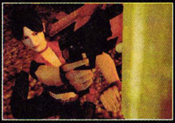
September 29, 1998

Leon S. Kennedy, a rookie police officer on his first day with the Raccoon City Police Force, is reporting for duty. He meets up with Claire Redfield, who is searching for her brother, Chris, after he discovers that zombies have overrun the city. ***(Resident Evil 2)***

October, 1998

The U.S. president authorizes the missile-based demolition of Raccoon City. Jill and Carlos make it out of the city just in time to avoid the explosion. ***(Resident Evil 3)***

December, 1998



Claire is captured by Umbrella guards while searching Umbrella's Paris lab for her brother Chris, and she is taken to a prison on Rockford Island. ***(Resident Evil Code: Veronica X)***

July, 2002

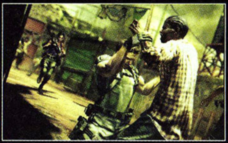
Leon S. Kennedy and Jack Krauser, a former special agent, are sent to South America to capture the leader of a drug-smuggling operation. ***(Resident Evil: The Darkside Chronicles)***

2004

Leon is hired to find the U.S. president's missing daughter, Ashley Graham, who was reportedly being held captive in Europe. A cult group known as the Los Illuminados is discovered to be behind the kidnapping, and they have created a parasite known as the Las Plagas, which allows for mind control of individuals who are carriers of the parasite. ***(Resident Evil 4)***

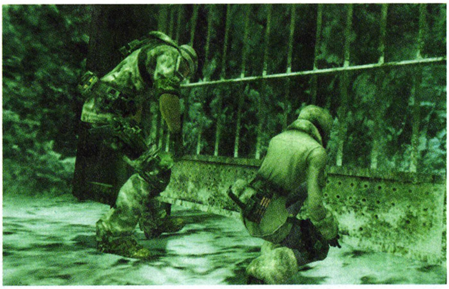
2005

Jill Valentine and Chris Redfield help found the BSAA (Bioterrorism Security Assessment Alliance). Chris vanishes, and Jill embarks on a journey to find him. ***(Resident Evil Revelations)***



2009

Chris Redfield, now a member of the BSAA, is sent to Africa. He meets up with Sheva Alomar, a member of the BSAA's African branch, and the two work together to neutralize an outbreak in a village. ***(Resident Evil 5)***



Jessica may complain a lot, pester Chris with her many questions, and be ill-prepared for trekking through the mountains, but she always has her partner's back.

feature to the controls, though; you can tap X to use a secondary weapon—in this case a knife that can be used to slash item-holding crates in addition to baddies. This one-tap melee strike makes it a snap to go from shooting to knifing. "We wanted to make the game controls stress-free so that the player can feel the fear more easily without having a hassle to figure out how to play," Kawata explains.

Admittedly, we didn't feel much fear at this point in the game. The wolves are deadly, sure, but they are not nearly as scary as the dogs in the prior Resident Evil titles (and certainly not as scary as that dog that crashes through the window in the very first game). These wolves—which, as it turns out, were the cargo the plane was carrying—are dangerous mainly because they attack in packs and run quickly, so it can be difficult to get a bead on a single foe. Once you do, however, the wolves go down with a couple of shots.

Of course, you can dispatch them even faster once you've found some BOW Decoys deeper in the mines. These grenade-like weapons are timed explosives that make a beeping sound, luring in any nearby BOWs. Thankfully, the BOW Decoys count as secondary weapons, meaning that—once you've toggled between the BOW Decoy and the knife by pressing left on the Control Pad or by selecting the BOW Decoy with your stylus—you can throw one of these explosives with a simple tap of the X Button.

TAKING ACTION

It behooves you stock up on BOW Decoys; as Chris and Jessica make their way through the mine—with Jessica periodically prodding Chris about Jill and sounding jealous of Chris and Jill's relationship—Chris loses his footing when trying to jump across a gap and slides down a cliff into a large open area. Due to his injuries, he can't move from his position. Things then go from bad to worse as waves of wolves appear. Fortunately, Chris can still rotate 360 degrees, and he has his knife, handgun, and BOW Decoys at

his disposal. Plus, Jessica is there to back him up. “Me and my sweet ass are on the way!” she shouts as she hustles to his aid.

With all of this combat, it’s clear that this Chris-centric demo is much more action-heavy than the Jill-focused one. But Kawata emphasizes, “[You may have the] impression of an action game since the RE4 game system was incorporated in the game engine, but you always have to risk death while progressing with limited ammo. Your mission here is to survive.”

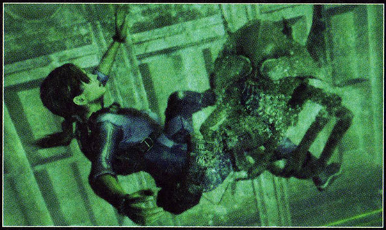
Survival isn’t too hard for Mr. Redfield, though, even if he is injured. Once the wolves are exterminated, Jessica gives Chris a helping hand—he seems to be able to shake off his injuries once he’s on his feet—and the two exit the mine. Outside they spot the airport in the distance, and using their binoculars they notice the crest on the side of the building marking it as a Veltro facility. “Veltro is a radical terrorist organization that operates on a global scale,” explains Kawata. “But they had never made an appearance in the RE series before.” Despite we gamers never having faced with them previously, Chris has at some point; he states that Veltro has been “resurrected.” While informing their boss, O’Brian, of this fact, Chris and Jessica learn that Veltro seems to be behind Jill and Parker’s capture. Chris and Jessica are tasked with heading off to the Mediterranean in search of their former partners.

THE BUDDY SYSTEM

Given the game’s—and Jessica’s—focus on partners, you would think cooperative play would be a no-brainer. After all, as in Resident Evil 5, your partner is almost always by your side. Furthermore, The Mercenaries 3D featured local-wireless and online two-player co-op. Alas, Revelations is a solo-only affair. “The theme of this game is survival-horror, so we are concentrating on the single-player experience in Revelations, which we feel is better suited to the genre,” Kawata tells us.

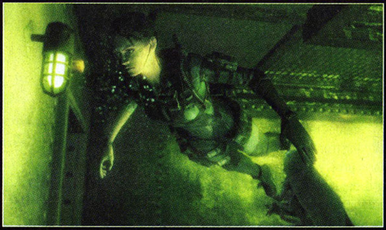
Although you won’t be able to play with a friend, you *will* be able to control both Parker and Jessica over the course of the adventure. “Naturally, they will have different skills from Jill and Chris’s,” reveals Kawata. “You will have to wait and see if their unique abilities can be useful in the game.” Of course, there’s no telling if Parker and Jessica themselves will always prove to be useful: Kawata teases, “Chris and Jessica’s and Jill and Parker’s relationships are new to the series. They were partnered up in order to achieve their objectives as agents; however, if any of them have any personal agendas is something that you won’t know until you play the game.”

For every answer we got after our hands-on play session with Revelations, we had even more questions. It kind of makes sense, though: in a game with the subtitle *Revelations*, things will be disclosed only once you’ve played through the game. Resident Evil: Revelations’s release date can’t come soon enough.



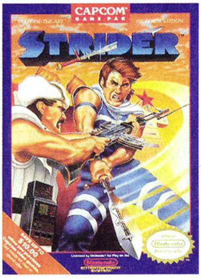
UNDER THE SEA

We haven’t experienced it yet, but we know that at some point Jill and Parker have to fight the new water-based enemies while they are swimming underwater. To make matters worse, we’re told that the usually slow-moving baddies are much faster in their natural environment. However, producer Masachika Kawata is hesitant to divulge much about subaqueous combat: “Underwater is a totally different game environment where a different control scheme is required. You can expect to see special weapons that come in handy underwater.” Let the speculation begin.



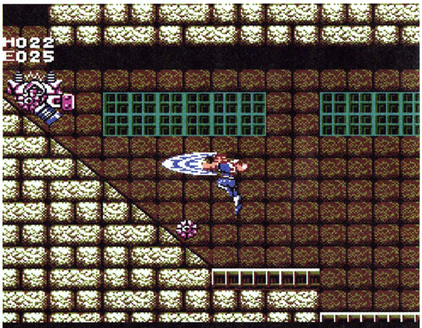
The pompadour is back, baby!

Strider



PLATFORM: **NES**
PUBLISHER: **CAPCOM**
DEVELOPER: **CAPCOM**
RELEASE DATE: **JULY 1989**
FEATURED IN ISSUES: **5, 7, 9, 38**
PAIRS OF STRIDER BOOTS LOST IN CHINA: **2**

The name's Hiryu. Strider Hiryu.



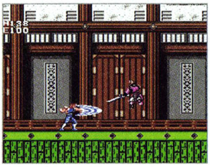
Strider. *noun.* 1: one who strides. 2: one who executes acts such as infiltration, abduction, explosion, instigation, etc.

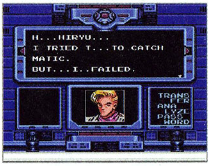
The 8-bit age began with games that were about moving from left to right. Super Mario Bros. was groundbreaking, sure, but it was stuck on a one-way street; Mario started at one end of the level and he ambled to the other. Later on, NES heroes figured out how to go in almost any direction. Like Link and Samus Aran, the sword-swinging ninja/commando Strider Hiryu went whichever way he had to...within the limits of two dimensions. (It was still the '80s, after all. Gamers could ask for only so much.)

Strider for the NES came out alongside a very different arcade version. (Have a look to the right for details on Hiryu's origin.) With its impressive-for-the-time 16-bit graphics, the arcade game seemed like the cooler prospect: giant sprites, extra detail, and some brain-twisting boss battles. Even so, arcade Hiryu is stuck on that one-way street. The NES game let him loose to slash and scale his way around a huge nonlinear game world. Each level had areas that gradually revealed themselves after Hiryu found hidden data files in other stages, and the action got more interesting as he gathered new moves and new bits of ninja–James Bond gadgetry. There was nothing like monkeying around on metal ceilings after finding the magnet boots.

In the background, a story with real teeth for its time quietly unfolded. To players back then, it was really something when Strider HQ flatly told Hiryu to go kill his best friend—and that was at the very beginning. The ending was so dark and depressing it's a wonder Capcom let the game hit American shelves without toning it down.

But perhaps the most memorable part of Strider—the signature visual that etched itself into players' minds—is the image you get when Hiryu swings his blade. You don't see a sword—just the arc that it slices through the air. It might have just been a way of saving on colors or animation frames, but it just seemed so cool. Hiryu didn't just go whatever way he wanted; he did it with style. **—DAVID S.**

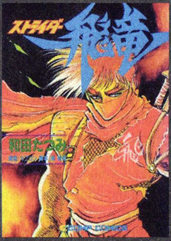




H...HIRYU...
I TRIED T...TO CATCH
MATIC.
BUT...I..FAILED.

STRIDIN' AIN'T EASY

Hiryu himself was born before either of the games that made him famous. He's an early attempt at a multimedia tie-in; Capcom intended to make Strider games while Kadokawa Shoten published a Strider manga series. The games would sell the comic, the comic would sell the games, and everybody would win.



Or not. Hiryu's printed adventures failed to set the world on fire. By the time Capcom had the console game ready to go, the comic had already come and gone, so the Famicom Strider simply went in the vaults. Japanese fans never got to play it—they got just the arcade game, finished several months earlier. It's a rarity—a Japanese-made classic that came out only in the West. Adding insult to injury, Capcom licensed Hiryu to a UK company that dished out a deeply questionable Strider II.

Hiryu finally made a triumphant comeback in the Marvel vs. Capcom arcade game and soon thereafter appeared in a true Strider sequel. Even so, it's pretty tough out there for a Strider.

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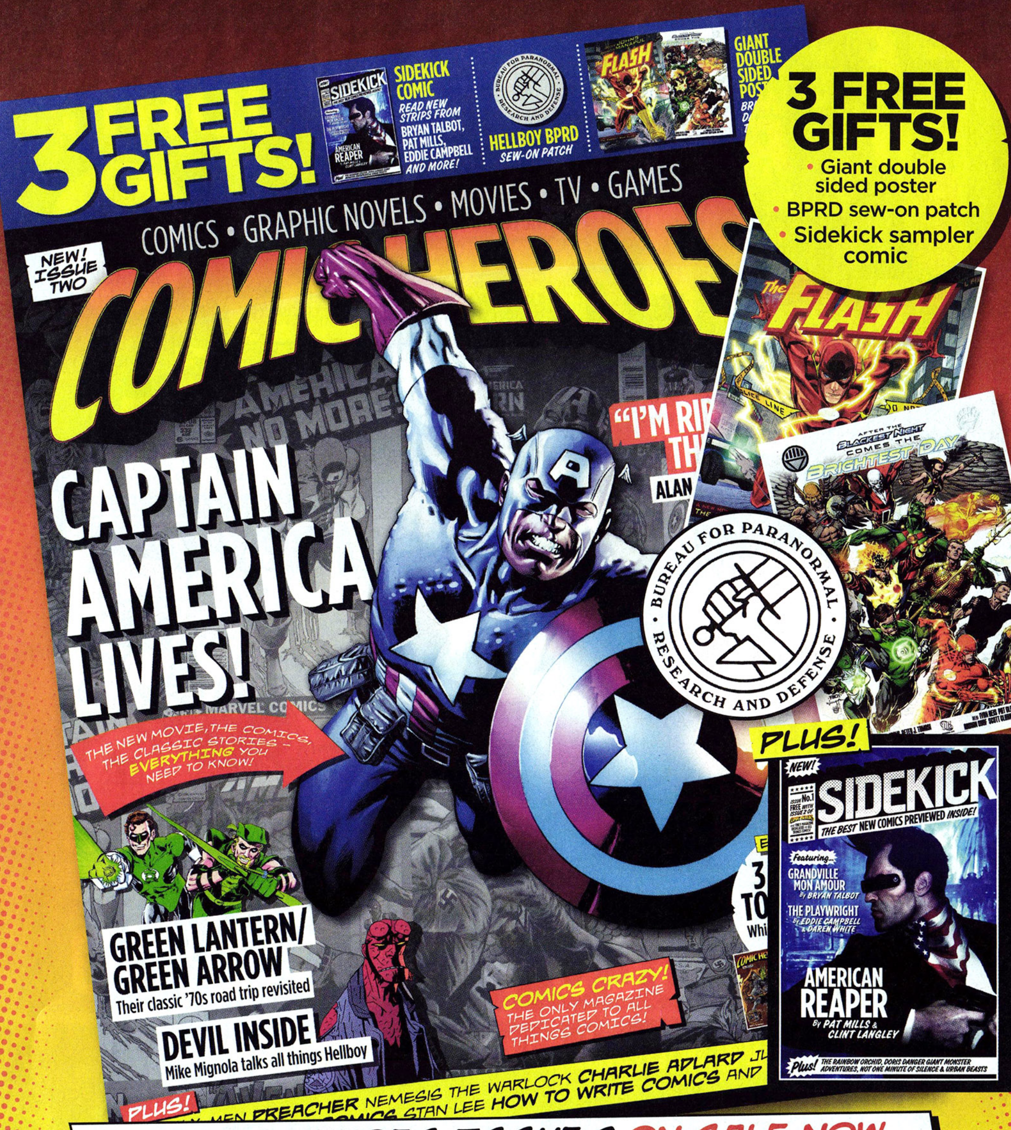
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REVIEWS

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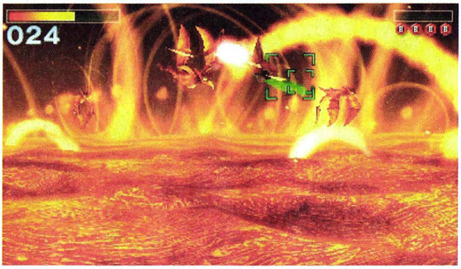
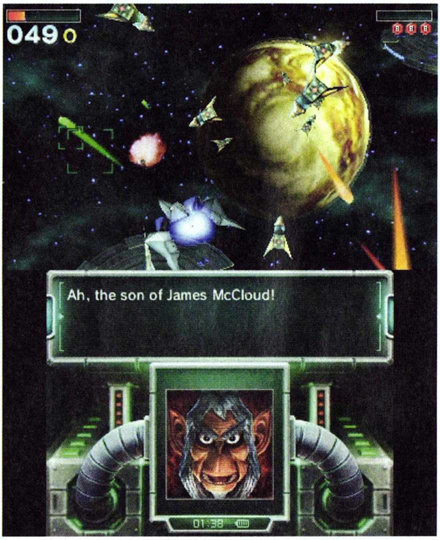
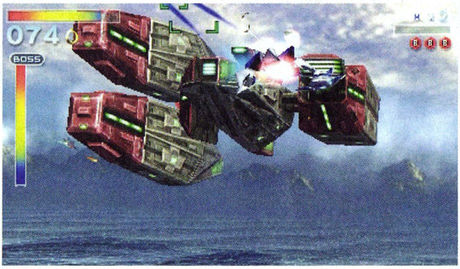
Team Star Fox recaptures its former glory in the latest must-have remake for Nintendo 3DS.





Ah, the son of James McCloud!



Return Flight

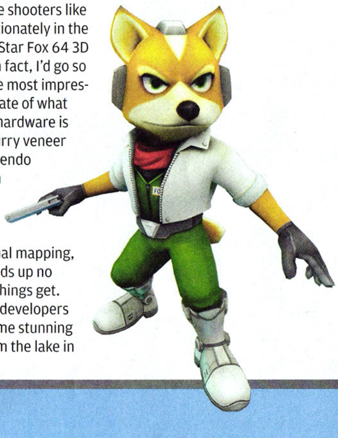
STAR FOX 64 3D

RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **Q-GAMES/NINTENDO**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

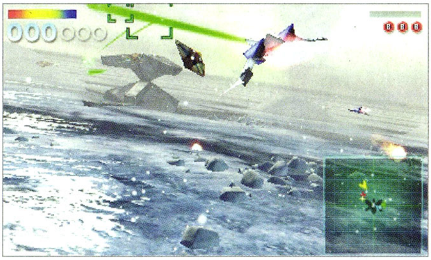
After underwhelming audiences with its past few installments then laying dormant for five years, Star Fox has been a series in dire need of a jumpstart. How fitting that the thing to finally supply that jolt is a return to Fox McCloud's all-time greatest exploit. Star Fox 64 3D, despite having one of the most awkward titles in recent memory, reminds us of what Nintendo's space opus can be and leaves us hungering for more like it. Ironically, it's also the best reason to boot up your 3D handheld since the publisher's last 64-bit restoration, The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D.

Though some members of the NP staff beg to differ, I feel that the upgrades to Star Fox 64 are even more compelling than those in Ocarina. That's not to say it's a better game, because it certainly isn't. But the appeal of space shooters like this lies disproportionately in the presentation, and Star Fox 64 3D looks incredible. In fact, I'd go so far as to say it's the most impressive showcase to date of what the Nintendo 3DS hardware is capable of. The blurry veneer of the original Nintendo 64 game has given way to gorgeously detailed texture work that makes liberal use of normal mapping, and the fidelity holds up no matter how close things get. On top of that, the developers have employed some stunning effects. As you skim the lake in the opening level, for instance, the light from your laser fire reflects convincingly along the water's surface. Hundreds of tiny burning embers float past your ship above a planet covered in lava, and the wreckage of a recently destroyed space station gives off a distinctive metallic sheen. Through it all, the frame rate remains remarkably smooth; we noticed only a couple of brief hiccups during our entire playthrough.



Then there's the 3D, which ranks among the best on the system. The picture remains crisp even with the slider cranked all the way up, and in no other game have I felt such a strong sensation that stuff is actually coming out of the screen. If you're looking for a way to show off the handheld's 3D capabilities to your friends, this is a great option. Beyond the visual impact, that enhanced sense of depth also has a beneficial effect on gameplay. Often, Star Fox 64 is as much about maneuvering through hazards as it is about shooting enemies, and the 3D helps you assess the distance between your ship and its surroundings. When the time does come to blow stuff up, the extra dimension makes it easier to determine the right moment to detonate your bombs.

For all its new visual pizzazz,



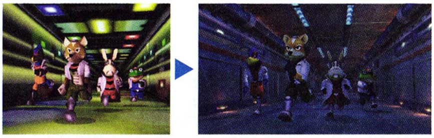
Star Fox 64 3D plays largely the same as its 1997 progenitor. That's not necessarily a bad thing; the core experience is pretty timeless and remains as much fun today as it was 14 years ago. Throughout the single-player campaign, you'll encounter three different types of missions. The most common type is on rails—that is, you can maneuver your ship around the screen but your overall path through the level is fixed. Those are the best of the bunch, as they allow the developers to construct a cinematic and tightly paced experience. Other missions grant full freedom of flight or drop you on the ground in a Landmaster tank. The former revolve heavily around dogfights, which occasionally leads to the same problem found in games like Ace Combat: You spend most of your time chasing down targets, only to have them zoom by in an instant so you can begin the process anew. As for the Landmaster missions, driving around in a tank simply isn't as cool as flying a spaceship. But those are niggling complaints; all of the missions are more entertaining than not and the variety is ultimately welcome.

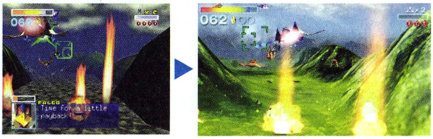
Less so is the constant chatter from your wingmen. The voice acting in Star Fox 64 was notoriously bad, and though Nintendo reassembled the original cast and had them re-record all of the dialogue, the results are every bit as grating. The biggest difference is that you can now hear their aural atrocities more clearly thanks to the superior sound capabilities of the N3DS. Maybe the poor vocal performances are meant to be some sort of nostalgia-fueled, self-deprecating joke. Whatever the case, I found them far too annoying to be funny. What would have been great is if the game took advantage of the handheld's built-in microphone so you could tell Slippy to shut up. He and the rest of your squadmates do serve a pretty cool gameplay purpose (see the "Meet Your Wingmen" sidebar), so I wouldn't want them to go away. But unless they have something crucial to tell me, they should heed the adage "silence is golden."

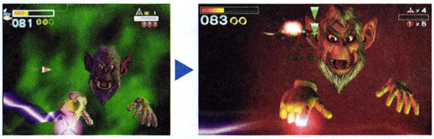
The game's soundtrack, on the other hand, is quite good. Originally composed by Hajime Wakai and the legendary Koji Kondo, it's appropriately theatric and seems to draw inspiration from the likes of *Star Trek* and *Star Wars*. Here, the improved audio quality over the N64 game is much appreciated. None of the themes are as memorable as Kondo's work on Mario or Zelda, yet they elevate the experience in such a way that a grandiose

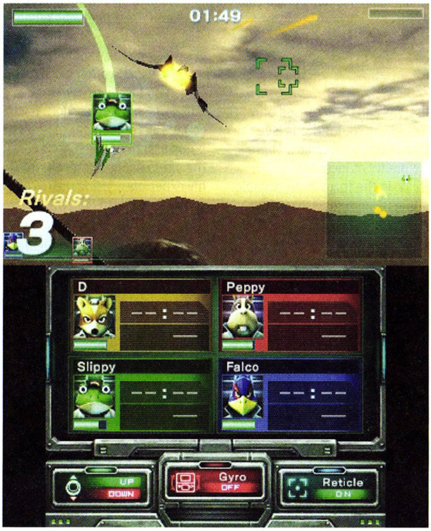
Performance Upgrade

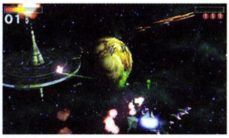
As you can see by the comparison shots below, the graphics in Star Fox 64 3D have come a long way from their Nintendo 64 origins.











All-Range Fighter
Arwing

ALL SCREENSHOTS HAVE BEEN CAPTURED IN 2D MODE.

Meet Your Wingmen

Throughout the single-player campaign, the other members of the Star Fox squadron will fight alongside you. Each provides a different form of support, so it's in your best interest to help them stay airborne. If one does get shot down, he'll have to go in for repairs and sit out the next mission.

SLIPPY TOAD

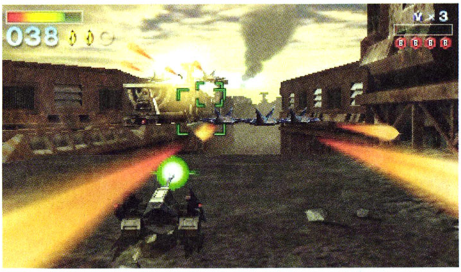
Though a bit clumsy in battle, Slippy is a top-notch mechanic responsible for the Star Fox team's vehicle maintenance and weapons development. During boss battles, he'll scan your foe and display the bad guy's life bar onscreen.

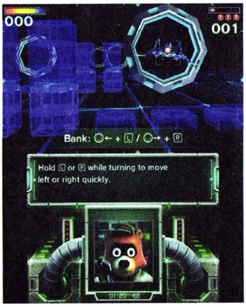
FALCO LOMBARDI

The former head of a galactic gang, Falco can come across as uncooperative at times. His piloting skills are second to none, however, and allow him to reveal paths to some of the game's alternate levels.

PEPPY HARE

Peppy is a veteran pilot who served with Fox's father, James McCloud. He occasionally dispenses helpful gameplay advice, like pointing out a boss's weakness or advising you, "Do a Barrel Roll!"





Bank: ○← + Ⓛ / ○→ + Ⓡ

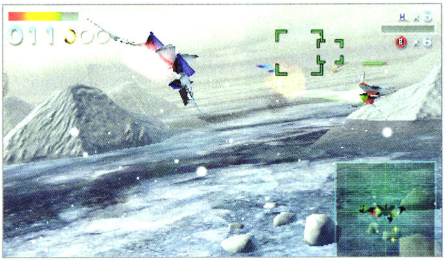
Hold Ⓛ or Ⓡ while turning to move left or right quickly.

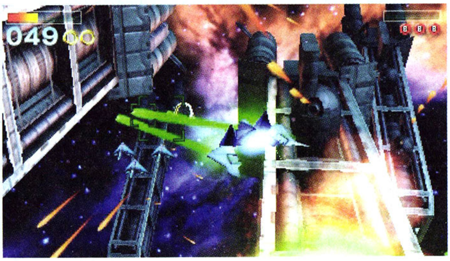
[Right] Training mode is helpful, but that raccoon's wide-eyed stare is creepy.

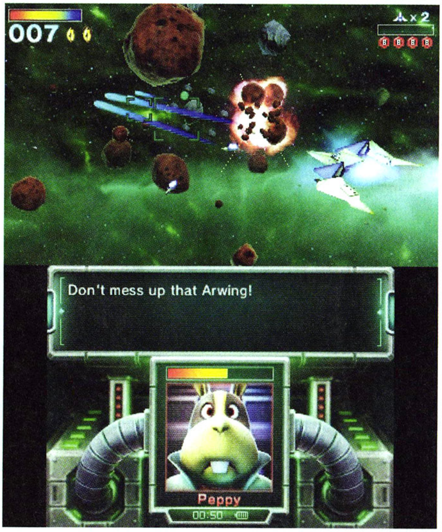
space opera starring a bunch of anthropomorphic animals somehow seems less ridiculous. That's a significant accomplishment.

Skilled pilots should be able to reach the end of said opera in a couple of hours. A single run-through barely scratches the surface of what the campaign has to offer, however. In fact, it'll expose you to only a third or so of the game's levels. While your journey always begins and ends at the same locations, there are a number of branching paths in between, and certain missions can be accessed only through secret methods (see the "Star Detours" sidebar). There's also plenty of incentive to replay, in the form of unlockable goodies and medals awarded for certain accomplishments.

When you kick off a new campaign, you'll choose between "Nintendo 64" and "Nintendo 3DS" modes. The former utilizes the Circle Pad to steer your ship and poses the same degree of difficulty as the original version of Star Fox 64. Depending on which path you take, things can get pretty hairy in this mode. The "Nintendo 3DS" option is quite a bit gentler and allows you to maneuver via the handheld's gyro sensor. In other words, if you tilt the system to the left, your ship will turn left. It sounds like a neat idea in theory, but in practice I much prefer the old-fashioned controls. In my experience, using the gyro sensor just doesn't provide the type of quick response and pinpoint accuracy you want in a







Star Detours

The requirements for reaching some of the alternate paths through the campaign are pretty obscure. Here are a few pointers.

CORNERIA

Save Falco when he asks for help at the middle of the level, then fly through each of the stone arches toward the end. Falco will tell you to follow him through a waterfall, which eventually leads to Sector Y.

SECTOR X

When the boss is nearly defeated, its head will explode to reveal a single red eye. If you don't shoot it, Slippy will try to do so himself, only to get swatted down. He crashes on Titania, and the rest of the team heads there to rescue him.

MACBETH

As you follow the train through this level, you'll eventually come to a series of eight numbered switches followed by one unnumbered switch. If you shoot all of them, you'll end up in Area 6.

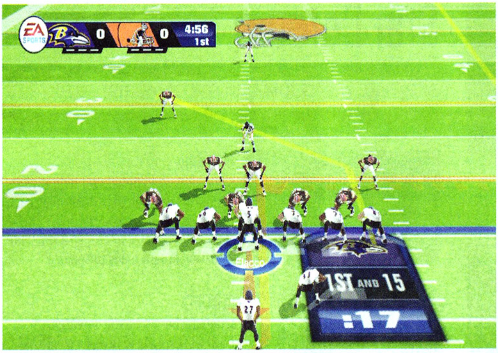
game like this. Plus, unless you're some sort of cyborg who can move your head in perfect synchronicity with your hands, you'll probably have to turn off the 3D effect (which, as mentioned previously, is a highlight of the game). Of course, since this control scheme is entirely optional, you can't really knock the game for including it. Just don't go in expecting it to revolutionize the way you play Star Fox.

Rounding out the package are a Score Attack mode that lets you replay any stage, an unlockable Expert difficulty, and the added ability to save your game (this was missing from the original N64 title). But the biggest extra is a local-wireless battle mode for up to four players. It's not as addictive as games that focus on multiplayer, like Mario Kart or Super Smash Bros., but as a supplement to a full-fledged single-player campaign, it's pretty solid. (Plus, the whole thing is accessible via Download Play.) There are four different maps available for dogfighting, and each offers unique terrain that can have a dramatic effect on how the battles unfold. Our favorite is Corneria, where towering skyscrapers and numerous underpasses make pursuing your targets especially... adventurous. To spice things up even more, you can enable multiplayer-exclusive power-ups such as force fields, stealth mines, and homing missiles. Battle mode also takes advantage of the front-facing camera built into the N3DS by streaming video of each player's face and displaying it next to his ship. That way you can glory in the look of crushing disappointment on your opponent's mug as you reduce his dreams of victory to so much burning wreckage. At least that's what I got out of it.

So Nintendo is officially two for two when it comes to N64 remakes. As with Ocarina of Time 3D, the publisher has taken the best game in a long-running franchise and made it better in every way. If you were a fan of the original, this is great reason to revisit it, and if you've never played a Star Fox game before, there's no better introduction. Hopefully it proves to be just what Fox and friends need to get back on a proper flight path; we'd love another one like this soon. —**STEVE T.**

050
Barrel roll: L / R x 2

ALL SCREENSHOTS HAVE BEEN CAPTURED IN 2D MODE.



[Above] As these Steeler defenders are discovering first hand, Ray Rice is a bad, bad man.

Field of the Familiar

MADDEN NFL 12

RATING: 7.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **EA SPORTS**
DEVELOPER: **EA TIBURON**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

This season's version of Madden is a like a big-name free agent coming off a career year. Both still have something to offer, but are largely hoping to cash in on past accomplishments. In Madden's case, that probably shouldn't come as a surprise given that a) the series underwent a major overhaul just 12 months ago and b) Nintendo has a new console on the horizon. (One that should be great for pigskin, by the way.) Madden NFL 12 feels like a stopgap, and if you already own its predecessor, there's little reason to upgrade.

Take Franchise mode. Not only does it lack any significant improvements or additions beyond last year's SimCity-inspired revamp; it even recycles the same art assets. The only change of note is a new free-agency system, which has you bid against other teams in real time. Ostensibly this is meant to inject the process with a bit of excitement, but it just ends up limiting your options and is likely to frustrate serious general mangers. The continued omission of a real preseason is also disappointing.

Likewise, not much has changed on the field. In fact, some niggling AI issues remain, including cornerbacks that too often seem to get lost in the secondary, allowing their receivers to run free. This is the sixth iteration of Madden on Wii, so those types of things really ought to be ironed out by now. The online component has gone mostly untouched, as well.

But lest this start to sound exceedingly negative, let's be clear. Madden NFL 12 delivers a rock-solid game of football. Everything we loved about last year's installment has carried over, plus the developers finally added support for the Classic Controller. (However, using the old-school pad means sacrificing one of the Wii version's coolest features—the ability to draw your own audible routes via the pointer.) It's just hard to remember the last time a Madden game changed so little from one season to the next. That's obviously not an issue for those who sat out NFL 11, but everyone else will need to decide whether updated rosters are worth another $50.

—STEVE T.

WRITERS' BLOCK

OTHER THAN SUPER MARIO 64 AND THE TWO LEGEND OF ZELDA TITLES, WHAT ARE YOUR DESERT-ISLAND NINTENDO 64 GAMES?

JUSTIN CHENG

WCW/nWo Revenge, WWF WrestleMania 2000, WWF No Mercy, GoldenEye 007, and Mario Kart 64 should keep me occupied for a long time.

CHRIS HOFFMAN

Conker's Bad Fur Day and WWF No Mercy would be must-haves for me. Beyond that, I'd probably bring Konami's underrated Goemon games.

CODY MARTIN

If I had a buddy with me, I'd take Mario Tennis, GoldenEye 007, and Super Smash Bros. If not, Mario Kart 64 and Star Fox 64 would keep me happy until I got rescued.

KENNY MARTIN

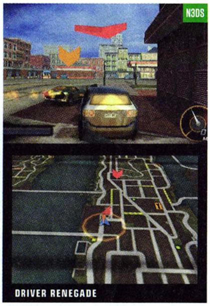
I would bring Kirby 64: The Crystal Shards, Banjo-Kazooie, Donkey Kong 64, Pokémon Snap, and Resident Evil 2. The first four are joyful, and I can play RE2 over and over.

CHRIS SLATE

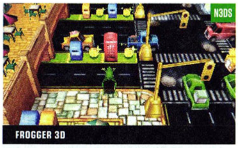
If I was stuck on the island for a long time, I'd like to have The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time simply because my daily conversations with the folks at Kakariko village would be the closest I could get to real human interaction. Geez, how depressing would *that* be?

STEVE THOMASON

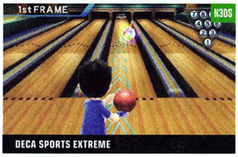
Assuming I'm going to be there a while, I'll choose games with some longevity: Ogre Battle 64, WWF No Mercy, and Mario Kart 64. I'll also bring the original Paper Mario since I haven't played it before.



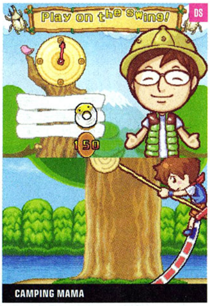
DRIVER RENEGADE



FROGGER 3D



DECA SPORTS EXTREME



CAMPING MAMA

DRIVER RENEGADE

RATING: 3.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT**
ESRB: **MATURE**

The Driver franchise doesn't exactly have a history of quality, but I tried to go into Driver Renegade with an open mind. The first Driver game was good way back when, after all, and it's always possible that the series will return to those roots. Unfortunately, Driver Renegade is yet another disappointing entry in a series full of them.

In fact, this might be the worst installment of the bunch. In addition to the mediocre storyline (in which protagonist John Tanner takes down crime bosses in New York City) and the laughably bad voice acting that accompanies it, the bland gameplay makes for a less-than-entertaining experience. The one saving grace is that the 20 Story-mode missions can be completed quickly—especially when you can exploit the brain-dead opponent AI. It's not uncommon to see enemies crash into buildings as they're making turns. Occasionally the bad guys will get stuck, making them easy pickings when you're tasked with disabling their vehicles.

Beyond the relatively short Story mode, Driver Renegade includes a Career mode wherein you compete in seven different race types to earn experience, unlock cars, and achieve high scores that you can share with your friends via StreetPass. This sounds good in theory, but as with the rest of the game, it's never actually *fun*. **—JUSTIN C.**

FROGGER 3D

RATING: 6.5

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
DEVELOPER: **ALPHA UNIT**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Konami has the right idea with Frogger 3D. Instead of trying to modernize the series with some totally hip anthropomorphic frog with a 'tude, they've opted to return the series to its roots with a simple game about navigating confined environments, avoiding obstacles, and reaching each level's goal. When the game sticks to this classic (yet variety-filled) formula of quick action and quick reflexes, it's pretty fun. Too often, however, there are poorly designed challenges that require pure trial and error to overcome. This makes the game far more frustrating than it should be, especially since the difficulty is pretty severe and you must beat each level three times (with the goal in different locations) to proceed to the next one. **—CHRIS H.**

DECA SPORTS EXTREME

RATING: 5.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **KONAMI**
DEVELOPER: **HUDSON**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

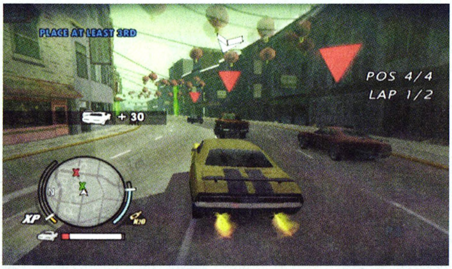
As the title implies, Deca Sports Extreme offers 10 sports to play, ranging from mildly addictive (tennis, bowling, soccer, basketball, and trampoline) to dull and frustrating (sumo wrestling and hockey). The controls are simple and responsive (except in hockey, in which intended shots on goal become passes), allowing people of all ages to pick up and play. Unfortunately, the sports lack the depth to remain engaging for long. The character customization is also very superficial, and combined with the minimalist stage designs, creates an overall bland presentation. Also, the 3D effect enhances only snowball fighting, blow darts, and snow sledding; the rest of the sports are better off without it. Deca Sports Extreme is fun at first, but it won't hold your interest long enough to justify spending $40. **—KENNY M.**

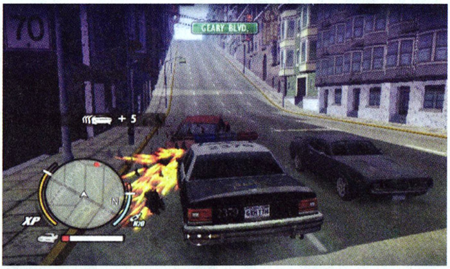
CAMPING MAMA: OUTDOOR ADVENTURES

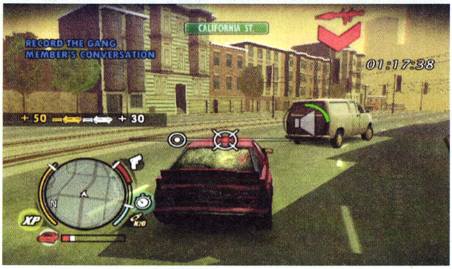
RATING: 5.0

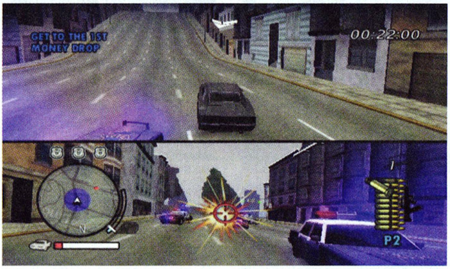
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **MAJESCO**
DEVELOPER: **COOKING MAMA LTD.**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Mama's back with an all-new hobby: instead of cooking, crafting, or gardening, she's roughing it in the great outdoors. Camping Mama still focuses primarily on the series's trademark minigame approach—with nearly 100 games, including chopping wood and flinging fruit at swinging monkeys—but now combines those speedy events within an on-foot Explore mode in which you'll complete simple gathering tasks and avoid woodland creatures. Explore mode turns the simple game into a larger experience, but it's also the only way to unlock the minigames, which turns this entry in the traditionally quick-hit series into a bit of a grind. And sadly, the dead-simple games themselves lack much of the charm, spark, and ingenuity of the older Mama entries. **—ANDREW H.**









Step on the Brakes

DRIVER SAN FRANCISCO

RATING: 4.5

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **UBISOFT**
DEVELOPER: **UBISOFT REFLECTIONS**
ESRB: **TEEN**

In an attempt to bring the Driver franchise back to its critically acclaimed beginnings, Ubisoft Reflections brings us series prequel Driver San Francisco. In this installment, you're confined to an automobile in a Grand Theft Auto-style open-world San Francisco, using your vehicle to race and/or wreck criminals and cops.

The narrative is told from three different perspectives, which is supposed to keep things varied. As undercover cops John Tanner and Tobias Jones, you're on a mission to end the city's gang violence and avenge the death of Tanner's fallen partner. You also get to play from the perspective of the game's primary bad guy, crime lord Solomon Caine. However, the game's generic plotline takes an absurd amount of time (and number of missions) to thicken. And the cut-scenes certainly don't do much to pique your interest, as you're either viewing comic-book-style panels or staring at the side of your vehicle while characters talk.

Further adding to the monotony is the fact that the game tends to overuse mission objectives. Attempts to spice up these assignments by incorporating different controller functions—such as aiming the reticle to record phone conversations, tilting the controller upward to manipulate a radar signal, and flicking the controller to ram into cars—feel unnecessary and quickly become a nuisance. Although it's satisfying to smash into other vehicles, the gestures required are often misread by the Wii Remote controller, making such missions frustrating. In addition, the idiocy of the game's AI is so profound that it's almost funny, especially when no one thinks to get out of the way when you fire at them with a machine gun while driving at reckless speeds.

At least the gameplay is fast-paced. Each individual pursues his goals by driving as fast as possible, and there are plenty of high-speed chases, police-evasion scenarios, and gang races to keep you busy. The handling of your car is fairly smooth and maintains a classic Driver feel, making something as simple as cruising around a joy. Plus, the game has a few on-rail segments in which you get to shoot and explode enemy cars. They're arguably the most fun the game has to offer, other than the assignments in which you're required to chase down and destroy moving vehicles.

The story mode is made better when you're playing with a second player. When applicable, you can have a buddy use the radar or point the reticle, allowing you to focus on driving. Your partner can also drop in as a gunner at any time, although, oddly, gunfire typically won't hurt or even deter enemies. Other multiplayer activities—which support up to four players—consist of bland minigames such as head-to-head races, capture-the-flag, and pass-the-bomb (think hot potato) modes. There are a few side co-op missions, too, but they wear thin after their first playthrough.

The more I played of Driver San Francisco, the more disappointed I became. At first it was easy to overlook the lack of polish, and I was charmed by the vehicle handling and the car chases. Nonetheless, the sluggish story and repetitive assignments made me feel like the game would never come to a close. At the end of the day, there just isn't anything spectacular about this release. Given how lousy its recent games have been, perhaps the Driver franchise should hit the road. **—CODY M.**

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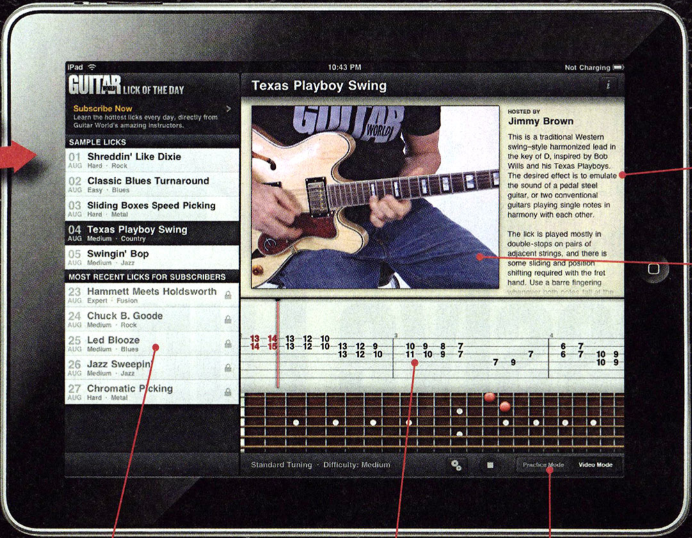

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Texas Playboy Swing

HOSTED BY
Jimmy Brown

This is a traditional Western swing–style harmonized lead in the key of D, inspired by Bob Wills and his Texas Playboys. The desired effect is to emulate the sound of a pedal steel guitar, or two conventional guitars playing single notes in harmony with each other.

The lick is played mostly in double-stops on pairs of adjacent strings, and there is some sliding and position shifting required with the fret hand. Use a barre fingering whenever both notes fall at the

Standard Tuning · Difficulty: Medium

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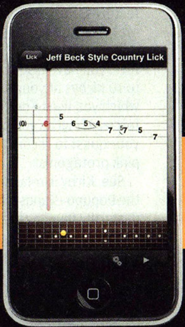
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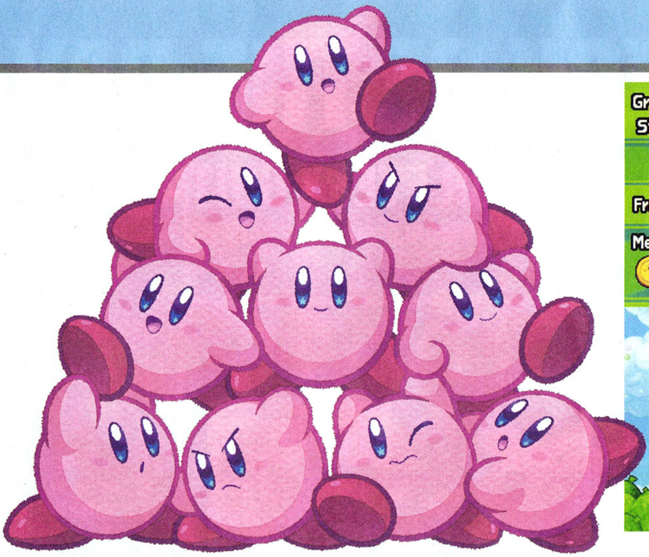
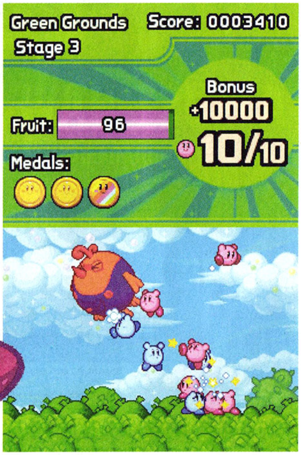




Massive Fun

KIRBY MASS ATTACK

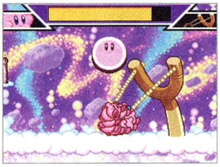
RATING: 8.0

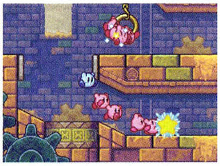
PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **HAL LABORATORY**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

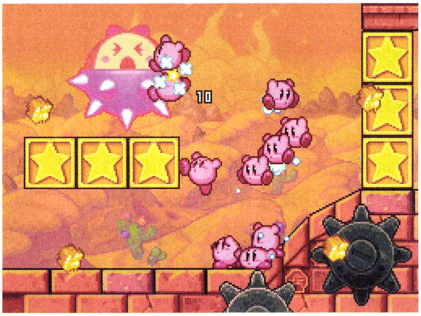
If one Kirby is cool, are 10 Kirbys cooler? That's a question posed by Kirby Mass Attack, a side-scrolling title that combines gameplay features from platformers and real-time strategy games. In this stylus-controlled adventure, you have a squad of up to 10 Kirbys at your disposal, which you use to defeat the forces of evil as you go on your quest to reconstitute the pink protagonist.

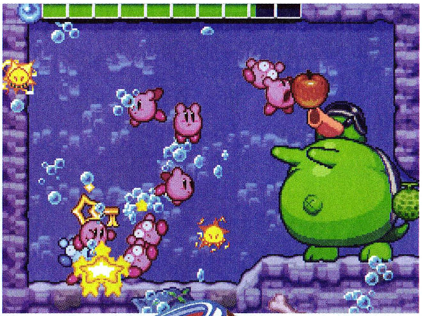
See, Kirby is relaxing on the Popopo Islands when a dastardly fiend by the name of Necrodeus appears out of the blue and uses his magic staff to divide the puffball into 10 little Kirbys. All but one of the Kirbys is dispatched; the lone survivor follows his heart—which appears in the shape of a star—to safety. Instead of controlling the diminutive rose-colored hero directly, you are in charge of his heart. If you tap a location on the touch screen, Kirby will march on over to wherever you tapped; double-tap with the stylus, and he'll run. When you tap on an enemy, Kirby will jump onto it and start pummeling it with his fists, as he doesn't have his famous Copy Abilities this time around. You can also slide the stylus over Kirby to fling him into baddies and breakable objects. Holding the stylus on the screen allows the little guy to grab onto the star, enabling you to carry him to otherwise-unreachable destinations.

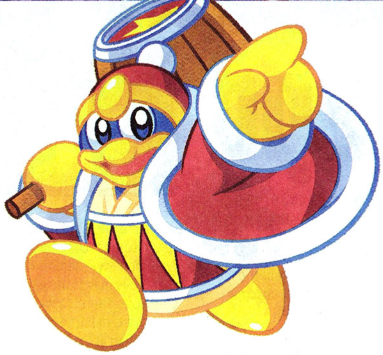
The control scheme feels odd when you're managing only one Kirby, but it makes a lot of sense when you factor in multiple puffballs. As you go through each level, you eat pieces of fruit; you acquire a new Kirby for every 100 pieces you consume. By the time you have 10 Kirbys in your arsenal, you're glad that you don't have direct control over all of them, as it would slow down the overall pace of the game considerably. The real-time strategy approach in this title works well for the most part and is simple enough for most gamers to get the hang of fairly quickly. Having said that, I wish the Kirbys wouldn't freelance quite as much as they do; for





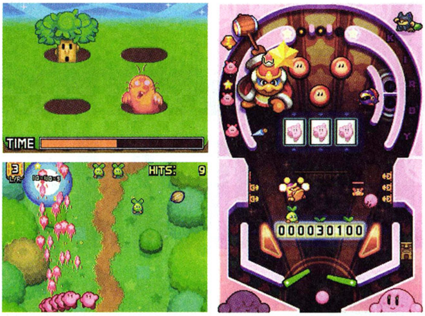






Mass Extras

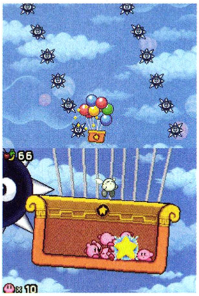
Collecting medals unlocks bonus content the game calls Extras. There are 14 Extras in all, many of which are minigames, including the whack-a-mole-ish Field Frenzy, the pinball-style Kirby Brawlball, and—one of my favorites—the vertical-scrolling shooter Strato Patrol EOS.

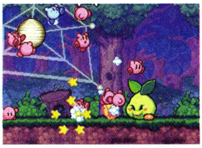


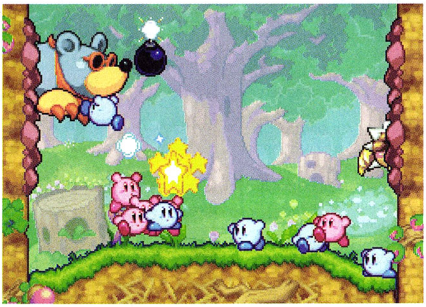
example, a couple of them would occasionally head down a path that I didn't want them to take, so I'd have to either backtrack a bit to get the band back together or just abandon the stragglers if there was no way to reunite the pack. Also bothersome is when I would try to rapidly launch Kirbys at a single enemy, only to have the pink fellows stop attacking and rejoin the puffball posse because I accidentally double-tapped the stylus on the swarm of Kirbys on which I was swiping. (This is more my lack of precision than the game's, but it can still be an annoyance.)

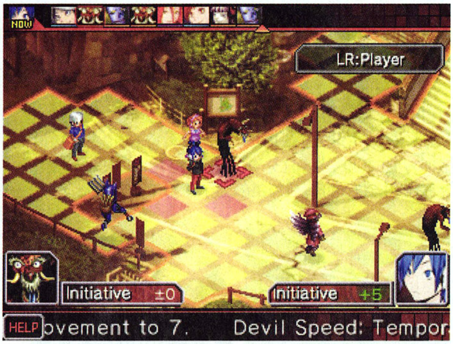
Still, these are minor irritations in an otherwise fun-filled adventure. Virtually everything about Kirby Mass Attack is solid, from the catchy tunes to the sharp 2D graphics to the sheer variety of levels. Forests, deserts, haunted houses, giant pachinko machines—it's all here. And not only does the game feature a lot of stages, but each stage has a handful of medals to collect. Finding each medal can be tricky—you have to scour the level for hidden areas, and some medals can be obtained only by meeting a quota of Kirbys to open up new sections—but you are rewarded with some fun minigames for your efforts (see the sidebar).

Ultimately, I feel that 10 Kirbys are not better than a normal-size, ability-copying one, but Kirby Mass Attack is a nice addition to the series nonetheless. The way this title utilizes the touch screen as the sole means of control is a pretty creative use of one of the Nintendo DS system's key features. For nostalgia's sake, I would like to see a return to the classic Kirby gameplay on a handheld at some point; but considering how much I enjoyed Kirby Mass Attack, I would gladly welcome another unconventional Kirby adventure. **—JUSTIN C.**

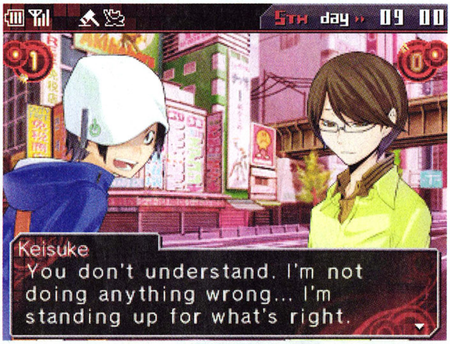








ovement to 7. Devil Speed: Tempor



Keisuke

You don't understand. I'm not doing anything wrong... I'm standing up for what's right.

Devilishly Good

Moh Shuvuu
Moh Shuvuu
Moh Shuvuu
EXTRA TURN
EXTRA TURN
Garm
Yuzu
Moh Shuvuu

SHIN MEGAMI TENSEI: DEVIL SURVIVOR OVERCLOCKED

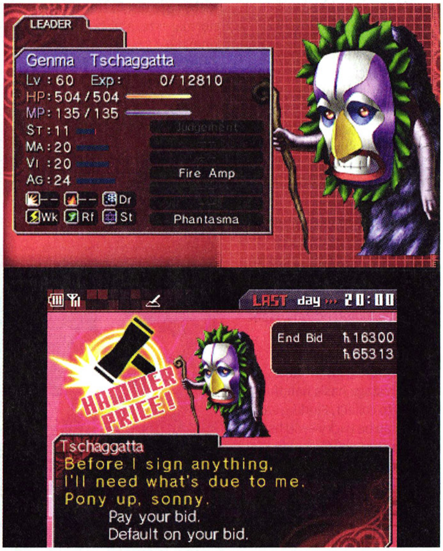
RATING: 9.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **ATLUS**
DEVELOPER: **ATLUS**
ESRB: **TEEN**

The first strategy-RPG for the Nintendo 3DS system is an update to one of the best on that handheld's predecessor. Originally released in 2009 on Nintendo DS, Shin Megami Tensei: Devil Survivor has returned in Overclocked form—meaning revamped graphics, fully voiced dialog, and beefed-up gameplay—but underneath it's still the same great game we reviewed a couple of years ago.

The plot centers on a group of Japanese high-school kids tossed in the middle of a supernatural crisis that has brought Tokyo to a standstill. Using some very specially modified handheld computers, they're able to fight the demons that are overrunning the city by summoning their own. As if that weren't enough, the band of unlikely heroes is working under a time limit—if they can't save the world in seven days (although there's an eighth added for this remake) they're toast. Packed with twists and several endings, the story is compelling and the dialog is well written—even if some of the newly added voice acting seems a little off the mark.

The redrawn, higher-resolution visuals definitely don't miss their aim, though. This game's interesting art style looked good on the DS, and it's even more eye-catching on N3DS (although beyond the intro movie there's no stereoscopic 3D effect to speak of).



Genma Tschaggatta
Lv : 60 Exp: 0/ 12810
HP: 504 / 504
MP: 135 / 135
St : 11
Ma : 20
Vi : 20
Ag : 24
Judgement
Fire Amp
Phantasma

LAST day »» 20:00

End Bid ћ16300
ћ65313

Tschaggatta
Before I sign anything, I'll need what's due to me. Pony up, sonny.
Pay your bid.
Default on your bid.

But it's the strategic, turn-based combat combined with Pokémon-style demon-collecting that really makes the game stand out. There's a wide array of demons to battle and collect (more than in the DS version), and their unique powers make it possible to change up your battle style to meet any challenge. If something's not quite working, you can buy new demons at a virtual auction house or fuse two together to make an even better battler. This adds a lot of depth to a game that's already pretty substantial, if a little on the difficult side at times.

While the graphics, sound, and gameplay have all gotten bumps for the Overclocked release, some elements are still a bit rough. The game's map, for instance, is still full of travel destinations that have no bearing on the story. It's also possible to lose a plot thread entirely because of a quick decision you had to make in the story. These gripes don't significantly bring down what is an otherwise top-notch work of storytelling and gameplay. You'll want to play this one even if you've beaten the non-Overclocked version more than once. —**RANDY N.**

Because the **Andersons** play video games, there's a system in place to make sure they **bring home the right ones.** This is how that system works: First, Mom and Dad select games using the ratings on the box. Step two everyone gets a controller. Step three, the **kids win.** This quality time is presented by the **ESRB.**

EVERYONE
E
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB

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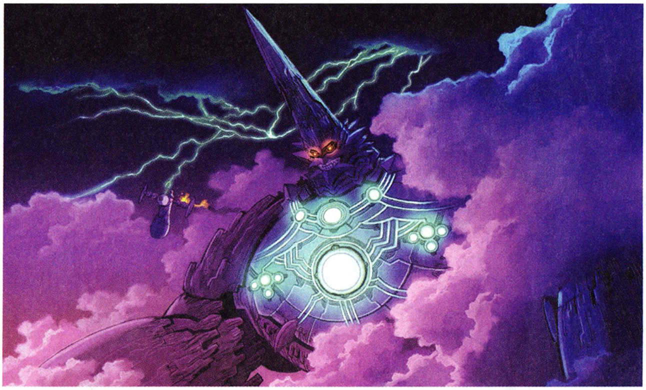
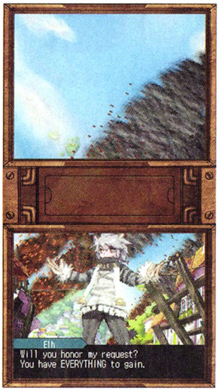
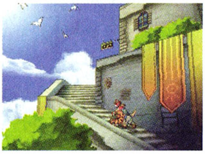




Elh
Will you honor my request?
You have EVERYTHING to gain.

Putting on the Dog



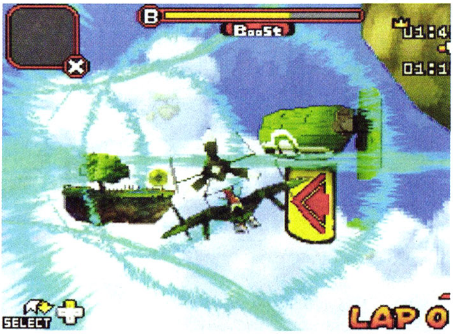
SOLATOROBO: RED THE HUNTER

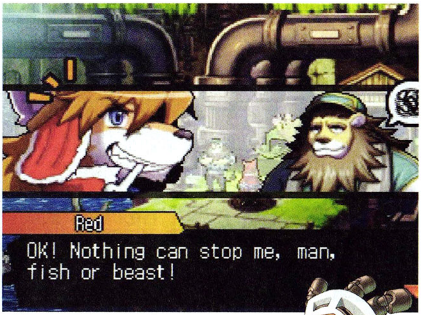
RATING: 9.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **XSEED**
DEVELOPER: **CYBERCONNECT2**
ESRB: **EVERYONE 10+**

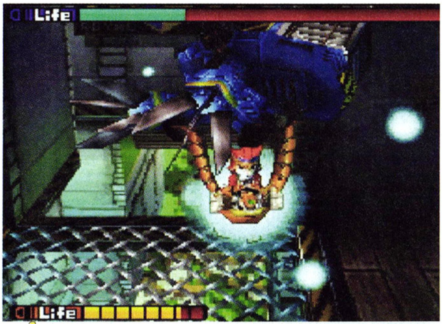
Twenty years ago, if you had asked me to imagine the future of gaming, I might have envisioned something like the brightly detailed worlds and intricate gameplay of Solatorobo. Little could I have known how much gaming tastes would change—who could have foreseen that cute animal heroes would be replaced by brooding teenagers and grim space marines, that hand-drawn backdrops would give way to polygonal environments, and that publishers would slavishly adhere to a handful of proven genre templates? Yet somehow developer CyberConnect2 has swum against all of these tides to create Solatorobo, a game that captures the bold, experimental spirit of the NES era with some of the finest production values ever seen on the Nintendo DS. Its furry animal heroes, bright watercolor world, and imaginative mishmash of genres seem completely out of place in 2011, but that only adds to its appeal.

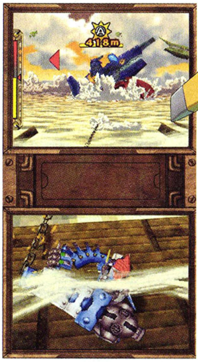
Titular hero Red Savarin is an adventurer, an airship pilot, and seemingly some sort of German-shepherd mix. While robbing an enemy vessel, he discovers a mysterious child (er... puppy?) named Elh, who offers him the bounty of a lifetime to help save the world. The game's story is pretty generic, but its cast members will win you over with their little quirks, like the way most are named after European desserts and greet each other with brief voice samples in French. The dozen or so islands that are the game's ports of call are beautifully illustrated and imaginatively designed, crafted with a unique combination of two-dimensional artwork and 3D geometry. Solatorobo's

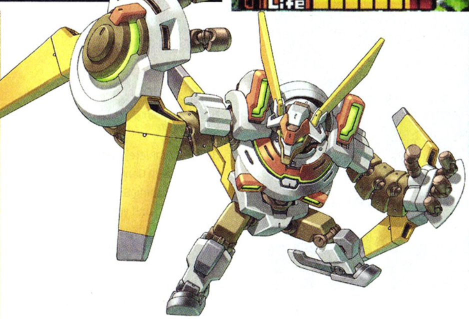


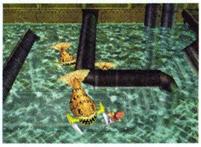


OK! Nothing can stop me, man, fish or beast!







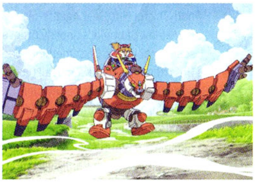


world is a lot of fun to explore, with each island offering something creative and interesting instead of the usual video-game standbys of ice continents, desert continents, and so on.

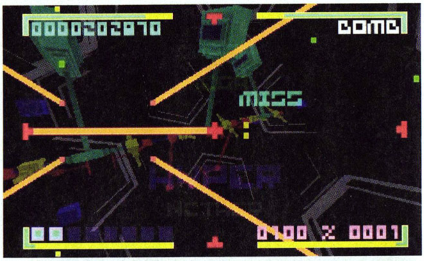
Solatorobo is structured like an RPG, with an agency in each town that offers brief quests to raise your hunter rank, which in turn allows you to accept the larger quests necessary to advance the game's story. This mixture of bite-sized tasks and meatier story missions is ideal for on-the-go gaming, offering ways to make meaningful progress with whatever amount of time you have to invest in the game.

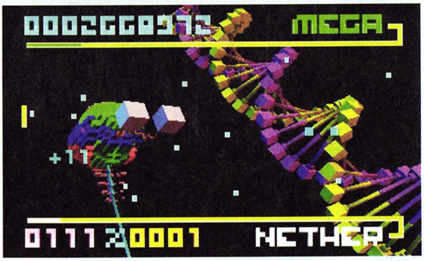
Despite its RPG flow, the dungeons and combat scenes in Solatorobo feature real-time beat-'em-up action. Red typically fights from the chassis of a mech that has no weapons aside from powerful hydraulic arms that can lift foes, hurl them at each other, slam them into the ground, or pluck their projectiles out of midair. The battle system is smooth, intuitive, and a ton of fun to play. I wish there were a little more depth to it, but a good variety of enemies keeps it interesting even once you've mastered its intricacies. The game is also rich with minigames in which you can hover across a sea of tiny islands, fly in an aerial race that includes Mario Kart-style items, or harpoon and reel in giant flying crabs. Some of these minigames are fun, some are not, but the developers throw in enough diversions to ensure that the core gameplay of town exploration, dungeon navigation, and mech combat never grows tiresome. The developers have also done a fine job of designing quests that avoid the usual RPG busywork. Instead of "kill 10 of this enemy"and "collect 10 of this item" drudgery, they're new boss fights, simple puzzles, midair escort missions, and the like.

Don't expect much of a challenge from Solatorobo, though; few enemies are strong enough to kill you, and the game's puzzles and dungeons are easy enough for children to handle. In other games the low difficulty curve might be a major flaw, but it works out OK in Solatorobo, a game that would much rather pull you toward its next attraction than force you to replay something twice. Its 20-hour quest is padded with a few more conversation scenes than it needs, but other than that it's a fast-paced, high-energy game that will never bore you with needless repetition or confuse you with unclear objectives.



Solatorobo was clearly a labor of love for its developers, and their enthusiasm for its world, characters, and play mechanics shines through in every moment of the game. What differentiates this title from so many other experimental video games and indie-studio passion projects is the expertise of the team at CyberConnect2, which has plenty of high-budget titles under its belt and knows exactly how to set an upbeat pace, fit in a generous amount of content, and polish up gameplay to make it intuitive and interesting for players of all ages. Furry heroes, artsy visuals, and a murky mix of genres may make for a tough marketing challenge, but if XSEED and CyberConnect2 can manage to get this well-made game into the hands of open-minded players, I doubt that many will be able to resist Solatorobo's charms. **—CASEY L.**





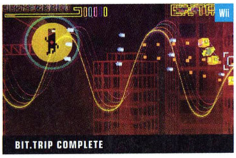
Trippier than Ever

BIT.TRIP SAGA

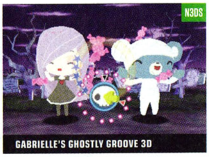
RATING: 8.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **GAIJIN GAMES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

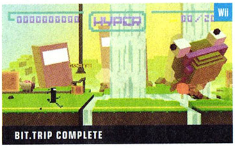
The Bit.Trip games—featuring retro-style graphics, existentialist themes, chiptune-inspired techno soundtracks, and simple gameplay that harks back to the days of yore—have always been pretty crazy. Now, with the addition of 3D visuals, the games in handheld compilation Bit.Trip Saga are crazier than ever. Not that you'll have a lot of time to admire the extratrippy effects—all six entries in this collection are intense, and you're probably going to be spending so much attention focusing on your paddle, character, or targeting cursor that you'll have little chance to breathe, let alone admire the visuals. Just like the Bit.Trip games' WiiWare counterparts, these titles are not for the easily frustrated; expect to replay levels over and over until you can master their confounding patterns. Fortunately, the games are challenging for the right reasons. The WiiWare iterations of Pong-style games Bit.Trip Beat and Bit.Trip Flux featured finicky motion controls, but that's alleviated with the ultraresponsive touch-screen controls of the Bit.Trip Saga versions (though they're still far from easy; the action got so fierce the stylus almost had to be surgically removed from my grip). Naturally, the quality of the six games varies. Platformer Bit.Trip Runner and on-rails shooter Bit.Trip Flux—the most modern-feeling components of the collection—are far and away my favorites, while the unforgiving nature of Bit.Trip Core (basically a rhythmic shooter) kept me at bay, but each game delivers its own brand of fun. It's just too bad that Bit.Trip Saga doesn't include the bonus content and variable difficulty settings of Bit.Trip Complete for Wii. **—CHRIS H.**



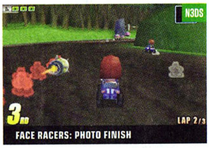
BIT.TRIP COMPLETE



GABRIELLE'S GHOSTLY GROOVE 3D



BIT.TRIP COMPLETE



FACE RACERS: PHOTO FINISH

BIT.TRIP COMPLETE

RATING: 9.0

PLATFORM: **Wii**
PUBLISHER: **AKSYS GAMES**
DEVELOPER: **GAIJIN GAMES**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Bit.Trip Complete pulls together all six titles in Gaijin Games's retro-inspired, genre-smashing Bit.Trip series on one Wii disc, and you're not likely to find a compilation that offers a more diverse selection of games—or a more entertaining overall experience. Despite their fairly disparate play styles—two Pong-like games, one platformer, and three different twists on the shooter genre—all of the games are exceptionally executed and wonderfully weird, with fantastic 8-bit-inspired visuals and sound. This collection adds some challenge stages and, for those not born with a controller in their hands, a more merciful difficulty setting so that everyone can enjoy the fantastic sights and sounds, and the "just one more go" fun they have to offer. **—RANDY N.**

GABRIELLE'S GHOSTLY GROOVE 3D

RATING: 5.5

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **NATSUME**
DEVELOPER: **SANTA ENTERTAINMENT**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

With its quirky characters, oddball story (the heroine sneezes her soul out of her body?), and Elite Beat Agents-inspired gameplay, Gabrielle's Ghostly Groove 3D seemed poised to be something special. Unfortunately, that's about all the game has going for it. The plot turns into sickeningly saccharine drivel after a few stages, and the tunes that aren't public domain are thoroughly forgettable. The basic gameplay—rhythmically tapping, flicking, or tracing on the touch screen, as dictated by onscreen indicators—is fun, but it's devoid of challenge. There's also a strange disconnect in the gameplay since all the icons that you must react to appear on the top screen, yet you interact with only the bottom screen. A hard mode makes things a bit more fun, but it becomes available only after you play through the game once. **—CHRIS H.**

FACE RACERS: PHOTO FINISH

RATING: 4.0

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO 3DS**
PUBLISHER: **MAJESCO**
DEVELOPER: **RENEGADE KID**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

Brought to you by the developer of innovative Nintendo DS titles such as Moon and Dementium, Face Racers: Photo Finish is a lackluster kart racer that takes its cues from—what else?—the Mario Kart franchise. But here's its selling point: the game plasters your face over the driver's with photos taken by the Nintendo 3DS Camera. Admittedly, this gimmick is amusing; other than that, however, Face Racers embodies the barebones basics of kart-racing—a maximum of four competitors can race at a time, and you can't drift or shoot items behind you. Generic power-ups, atrocious graphics, and an abundance of recycled textures certainly don't help the game's case. Renegade Kid, you've got some 'splaining to do. **—CODY M.**

MATURE 17+
M
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
HELLO
my name is
Chris

This is Chris, hardcore gamer. He's been playing games ever since he could grip a controller. When he was growing up, **his parents used the ESRB ratings** to choose the games that were right for him. One day he'll use the ratings to **decide what games his kids play** – he just doesn't know it yet.

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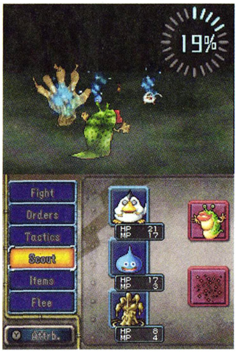
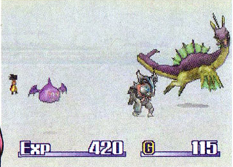




No Laughing Matter

DRAGON QUEST MONSTERS: JOKER 2

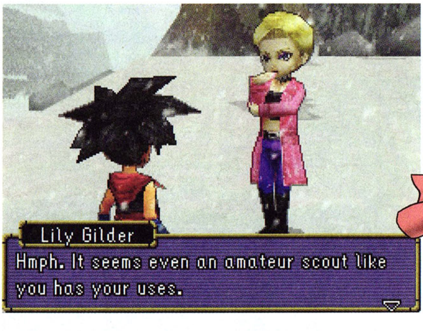
RATING: 7.5

PLATFORM: **NINTENDO DS**
PUBLISHER: **NINTENDO**
DEVELOPER: **SQUARE ENIX**
ESRB: **EVERYONE**

It's been nearly four years since the release of Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker on Nintendo DS, a title that delighted fans of the Dragon Quest Monsters games with its polygonal graphics and improvements on monster-collecting. If you're unfamiliar with this somewhat esoteric subseries, however, all you really need to know is that Dragon Quest Monsters is a creature-capturing and -training RPG that includes elements from the mainline Dragon Quest games. You construct a party of up to six monsters (three can be used in battle while the others are kept in reserve), and you command your team using a turn-based fighting system.

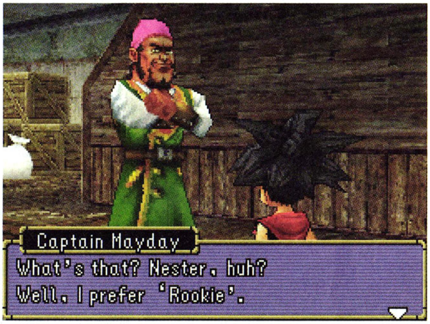
DQMJ2 begins with a clichéd protagonist—your character is a young spiky-haired fellow who aspires to train a team of monsters and become the very best Monster Scout of them all. In an attempt to get to the renowned Monster Scout Championship, he stows away on a flying airship, which unexpectedly crash-lands on an island teeming with beasties. Now tasked with finding the ship's captain and scattered passengers, it's up to you to explore the various regions of the island.

Your monsters are essential to advancing through the story, so you can expect to invest a lot of time and energy into



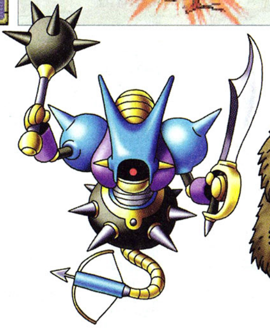
Lily Gilder

Hmph. It seems even an amateur scout like you has your uses.



Captain Mayday

What's that? Nester, huh?
Well, I prefer 'Rookie'.



tinkering with your roster. To capture an enemy creature, you command your active team to "scout," or demonstrate a nonlethal display of strength. Each beast's attack display equates to a percentage, and the sum of the beasts' percentages determines the chance that the target will be intimidated enough to join you. It's a nice change of pace from the traditional weaken/capture systems of other monster-trainer games.

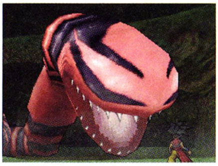
However, you'll need to create monsters to truly maximize your party. Synthesis—combining two beasts to create a more powerful one—allows you to obtain stronger creatures than those found in the wild, and is a key element in strengthening your team. Each monster has unique stats and abilities that it passes down to the offspring, so there's plenty of room for customizing your creations (and merging the tougher ones). The game really becomes a joy once you synthesize your first powerhouse, allowing you to crush your opponents. But potency comes with a price. To create a level-one monster, each parent must be at least level ten, which means there'll be plenty of repetitive level-grinding throughout your journey.

With the game's smorgasbord of different creatures to scout and synthesize, constructing your crew is addictive through the very end of the story—and then some. Stopping at the credits leaves you wanting more, and you're in luck; Joker 2 is only halfway over at that point. In addition to various side quests and tournaments still remaining after the story, you'll have more than half of the game's varmints left to collect, including the legendary megabeasts you initially ran away from. Since backtracking is a breeze with your character's teleportation skills, you'll want to spend hours scouring each region for new beasts, rebuilding your team with different combinations, and exploring every nook and cranny of the island for hidden items.

Players can also pit their monster teams against each other in both online and local wireless battles, and those who connect with Tag Mode can scout each other's monsters. Tag Mode even works with copies of Dragon Quest VI and IX, allowing you to scout the monsters in those games, too.

Unfortunately, the slow-paced plot (roughly 20 hours in length) isn't very deep. In addition, building your ever-changing party of monsters constantly demands your attention, so there isn't a lot of human-character development or rich dialogue. The story's simple progression gives purpose to your monster-training, but it does no favors for players trying to immerse themselves in the adventure. There are no towns, either, and the characters you meet are mostly forgettable. Furthermore, the music could use a bit more variety, as the same bland melodies are often recycled.

Monster-training fans will find the niche vibe in Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker 2 charming, but the focus on grinding and collecting might turn off casual players. The game's sluggish pacing and lack of a compelling story certainly create a high barrier to entry if you aren't already a fan of this type of game. If you can endure the grind, however, you'll find that having an earth-shattering trio of beasts at your disposal is well worth the trouble. —**CODY M.**



Philiage attacks!

REVIEWS ARCHIVE

THE COMPLETE LIST OF NINTENDO POWER REVIEWS FROM THE PAST YEAR

SCORES REFLECT INDIVIDUAL REVIEWERS' OPINIONS

Wii

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Arc Rise Fantasia	7.5	Ignition	256	T
Batman: The Brave and the Bold: The Video Game	7.0	Warner Bros.	260	E10+
Captain America: Super Soldier	5.5	Sega	270	T
Cars 2: The Video Game	7.0	Disney	269	E10+
Conduit 2	7.5	Sega	266	T
Create	5.0	Electronic Arts	262	E
de Blob 2	8.0	THQ	265	E
Deca Sports 3	4.5	Hudson	261	E
Despicable Me: The Game	4.0	D3Publisher	258	E10+
DJ Hero 2	9.0	Activision	262	T
Donkey Kong Country Returns	8.5	Nintendo	262	E
Epic Mickey	8.5	Disney	263	E
FIFA Soccer 11	8.0	Electronic Arts	260	E
FlingSmash	7.5	Nintendo	261	E
Flip's Twisted World	6.0	Majesco	260	E
GoldenEye 007	8.5	Activision	262	T
Green Day: Rock Band	8.0	MTV	256	T
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	4.0	Warner Bros.	270	E10+
Guilty Party	7.0	Disney	259	E
Guitar Hero: Warriors of Rock	8.0	MTV	261	T
Gunblade NY & LA Machineguns Arcade Hits Pack	5.5	Sega	259	T
Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows—Part 1	4.0	Electronic Arts	262	T
Iron Man 2	4.0	Sega	256	T
Ivy the Kiwi?	7.5	XSEED	259	E
Kirby's Epic Yarn	8.5	Nintendo	261	E
Kung Fu Panda 2	2.5	THQ	268	E10+
The Last Airbender	6.0	THQ	257	T
LEGO Harry Potter: Years 1-4	7.5	Warner Bros.	257	E10+
LEGO Pirates of the Caribbean: The Video Game	7.0	Disney	268	E10+
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	8.0	LucasArts	266	E10+
Legend of the Guardians: The Owls of Ga'Hoole	4.5	Warner Bros.	260	E10+
The Lord of the Rings: Aragorn's Quest	5.5	Warner Bros.	260	T
Lost In Shadow	8.0	Hudson	263	E10+
Madden NFL 11	8.5	Electronic Arts	258	E
Mario Sports Mix	8.0	Nintendo	264	E
Metroid: Other M	8.5	Nintendo	259	T
Michael Jackson: The Experience	6.5	Ubisoft	262	E10+
MySims Skyheroes	7.5	Electronic Arts	260	E10+
Mystery Case Files: The Malgrave Incident	6.0	Nintendo	269	E
Namco Museum Megamix	5.0	Namco Bandai	261	E
Naruto Shippuden: Dragon Blade Chronicles	4.5	Tomy	262	E10+
NASCAR 2011: The Game	3.0	Activision	269	E
NBA 2K11	6.5	2K Sports	261	E
NBA Jam	9.0	Electronic Arts	260	E
NHL Slapshot	6.0	Electronic Arts	259	E
Pac-Man Party	4.5	Namco Bandai	262	E10+
Pirates Plundarrr	4.0	Majesco	255	E10+
PokéPark Wii: Pikachu's Adventure	7.5	Nintendo	261	E
Prince of Persia: The Forgotten Sands	8.0	Ubisoft	255	T
Rango	5.0	Paramount	266	E10+
Raving Rabbids Travel In Time	6.5	Ubisoft	262	E10+
Rio	4.0	THQ	267	E
Rock Band 3	9.0	MTV	261	T
Sam & Max: Beyond Time and Space	8.0	Atari	255	T
Samurai Warriors 3	6.0	Nintendo	260	T
Sengoku Basara: Samurai Heroes	7.0	Capcom	261	T
Sid Meier's Pirates!	8.5	2K Games	260	E10+
Sin and Punishment: Star Successor	9.0	Nintendo	257	T
Sonic Colors	9.0	Sega	261	E
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	8.0	Activision	260	T
SpongeBob SquigglePants	7.0	THQ	266	E
Star Wars: The Force Unleashed II	8.0	LucasArts	261	T
Super Mario All-Stars	9.0	Nintendo	263	E
Super Mario Galaxy 2	9.5	Nintendo	256	E
Swords	5.0	Majesco	260	T
Thor: God of Thunder	5.5	Sega	267	T
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 11	9.0	Electronic Arts	256	E
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 12: The Masters	8.5	Electronic Arts	266	E
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	6.0	Ubisoft	262	T
Top Spin 4	7.0	2K Sports	266	E
Tournament of Legends	7.0	Sega	257	T
Toy Story 3: The Video Game	7.5	Disney	257	E10+
Transformers: Cybertron Adventures	5.0	Activision	258	T
Transformers: Dark of the Moon—Stealth Force Edition	3.0	Activision	270	E10+
TRON: Evolution—Battle Grids	6.5	Disney	263	E10+
Virtua Tennis 4	8.0	Sega	267	E
Wii Party	7.5	Nintendo	260	E
Wii Play: Motion	7.5	Nintendo	268	E10+
Worms: Battle Islands	7.0	THQ	264	E10+
WWE All Stars	6.5	THQ	266	T
WWE SmackDown vs. Raw 2011	7.5	THQ	262	T

Nintendo DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Atari's Greatest Hits Vol. 1	5.0	Atari	261	E
ATV Wild Ride	7.0	Destineer	264	E
Blue Dragon: Awakened Shadow	7.5	D3Publisher	256	E10+
Captain America: Super Soldier	3.5	Sega	270	E10+
Crafting Mama	7.0	Majesco	261	E
de Blob 2	8.0	THQ	265	E
Despicable Me: The Game—Minion Mayhem	7.0	D3Publisher	258	E
Dragon Ball: Origins 2	8.0	Namco Bandai	256	T
Dragon Quest VI: Realms of Revelation	7.5	Nintendo	265	T
Dragon Quest IX: Sentinels of the Starry Skies	9.0	Nintendo	257	E10+
Etrian Odyssey III: The Drowned City	8.5	Altus	260	E10+
Final Fantasy: The 4 Heroes of Light	8.0	Square Enix	260	E10+

MORE ON:

TRANSFORMERS: DARK OF THE MOON—AUTOBOTS

One the plus side, you can actually change from a robot into a car and back again in this edition of Transformers: Dark of the Moon, which is a step up from the vehicle-centric Wii and Nintendo 3DS versions. Unfortunately, everything else about this game belongs on planet Junkion. —JUSTIN C.

MORE ON:

NINE HOURS, NINE PERSONS, NINE DOORS

Despite lacking animated cut-scenes and being very text-heavy, the M-rated 999 is better as a video game than a graphic novel. For one, manipulating objects around you to unlock an escape route really draws you into the experience. Secondly, the sound effects magnify the story's ominous mood. And while the story may be a little too big for its own good, you will definitely be abuzz with conversation after witnessing the shocking conclusion. —KENNY M.

Ghost Trick: Phantom Detective	**9.0**	Capcom	263	T
Giana Sisters DS	**9.0**	Destineer	265	E
Golden Sun: Dark Dawn	**8.0**	Nintendo	262	E10+
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	**3.5**	Warner Bros.	270	E10+
Harvest Moon: Grand Bazaar	**6.0**	Natsume	258	E
Iron Man 2	**6.5**	Sega	256	E10+
Ivy the Kiwi?	**7.0**	XSEED	259	E
Kingdom Hearts Re:coded	**8.0**	Square Enix	263	E10+
Kung Fu Panda 2	**4.5**	THQ	268	E10+
The Last Airbender	**7.5**	THQ	257	E10+
LEGO Battles: Ninjago	**7.5**	Warner Bros.	267	E
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	**8.0**	LucasArts	266	E
Lufia : Curse of the Sinistrals	**8.0**	Natsume	260	E10+
Mario vs. Donkey Kong: Mini-Land Mayhem!	**7.5**	Nintendo	262	E
Mega Man Zero Collection	**9.0**	Capcom	256	E
Monster Tale	**8.0**	Majesco	265	E
Naruto Shippuden: Naruto vs. Sasuke	**5.0**	Tomy	262	E10+
Naruto Shippuden: Shinobi Rumble	**6.0**	Tomy	264	T
Nine Hours, Nine Persons, Nine Doors	**9.0**	Aksys	262	M
Okamiden	**8.0**	Capcom	265	E10+
Plants vs. Zombies	**9.0**	PopCap	264	E10+
Pokémon Black and Pokémon White Versions	**9.0**	Nintendo	265	E
Pokémon Ranger: Guardian Signs	**7.0**	Nintendo	260	E
Professor Layton and the Unwound Future	**9.0**	Nintendo	260	E10+
Puzzle Quest 2	**7.5**	D3Publisher	257	E10+
Radiant Historia	**8.5**	Atlus	265	E10+
Rango	**7.0**	Paramount	266	E
Rio	**5.5**	THQ	267	E
River City Soccer Hooligans	**7.0**	Aksys	256	T
River City Super Sports Challenge	**6.0**	Aksys	258	T
Rune Factory 3: A Fantasy Harvest Moon	**8.5**	Natsume	262	E
Sonic Colors	**7.5**	Sega	261	E
Spider-Man: Shattered Dimensions	**7.0**	Activision	260	E10+
Super Scribblenauts	**8.5**	Warner Bros.	261	E
Tetris Party Deluxe	**8.5**	Majesco	256	E
Thor: God of Thunder	**6.0**	Sega	267	E10+
Transformers: Dark of the Moon—Autobots/ Decepticons	**3.0**	Activision	270	E10+
Transformers: War for Cybertron	**7.0**	Activision	258	E10+
TRON: Evolution	**6.5**	Disney	263	E10+

Nintendo 3DS

TITLE	SCORE	PUBLISHER	VOL.	ESRB
Asphalt 3D	**6.0**	Ubisoft	266	E10+
BlazBlue: Continuum Shift II	**8.5**	Aksys	268	T
Cartoon Network Punch Time Explosion	**7.0**	Crave	267	E10+
Cubic Ninja	**4.0**	Ubisoft	268	E
Dead or Alive Dimensions	**9.0**	Tecmo Koei	267	T
Dual Pen Sports	**7.0**	Namco Bandai	270	E10+
Green Lantern: Rise of the Manhunters	**4.0**	Warner Bros.	270	E10+
The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D	**9.5**	Nintendo	268	E10+
LEGO Star Wars III: The Clone Wars	**8.5**	LucasArts	266	E10+
Madden NFL Football	**6.0**	Electronic Arts	266	E
nintendogs + cats	**7.5**	Nintendo	266	E
Pac-Man & Galaga Dimensions	**7.0**	Namco Bandai	269	E10+
Pilotwings Resort	**8.0**	Nintendo	266	E
Pinball Hall of Fame: The Williams Collection 3D	**7.0**	Crave	268	E10+
Rabbids Travel in Time 3D	**6.5**	Ubisoft	267	E
Rayman 3D	**8.0**	Ubisoft	266	E
Reel Fishing Paradise 3D	**6.0**	Natsume	269	E
Resident Evil: The Mercenaries 3D	**7.5**	Capcom	269	M
Ridge Racer 3D	**8.0**	Namco Bandai	266	E
Samurai Warriors: Chronicles	**7.0**	Tecmo Koei	266	T
The Sims 3	**7.0**	Electronic Arts	266	T
SpongeBob SquigglePants	**7.5**	THQ	267	E
Steel Diver	**8.0**	Nintendo	266	E10+
Super Monkey Ball 3D	**7.5**	Sega	266	E
Super Street Fighter IV 3D Edition	**9.0**	Capcom	266	T
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon: Shadow Wars	**8.0**	Ubisoft	266	T
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell 3D	**5.5**	Ubisoft	267	T
Transformers: Dark of the Moon—Stealth Force Edition	**4.0**	Activision	270	E10+

MORE ON:

DUAL PEN SPORTS

BANDAI
0:17:23
Ginger
1:03:20
Slide Right
Turn Right
Slide Left
Turn Left
Speed
75km/h

It's slightly irritating that you need a flat surface in order to play properly, but Dual Pen Sports is rather entertaining. You'll be charmed by the title's bubbly music and cutesy graphics right off the bat, and most of its activities are amusing enough to revisit more than a few times. Using two styluses is challenging at first, but the game's fun training exercises help you get used to the unique control scheme. —CODY M.

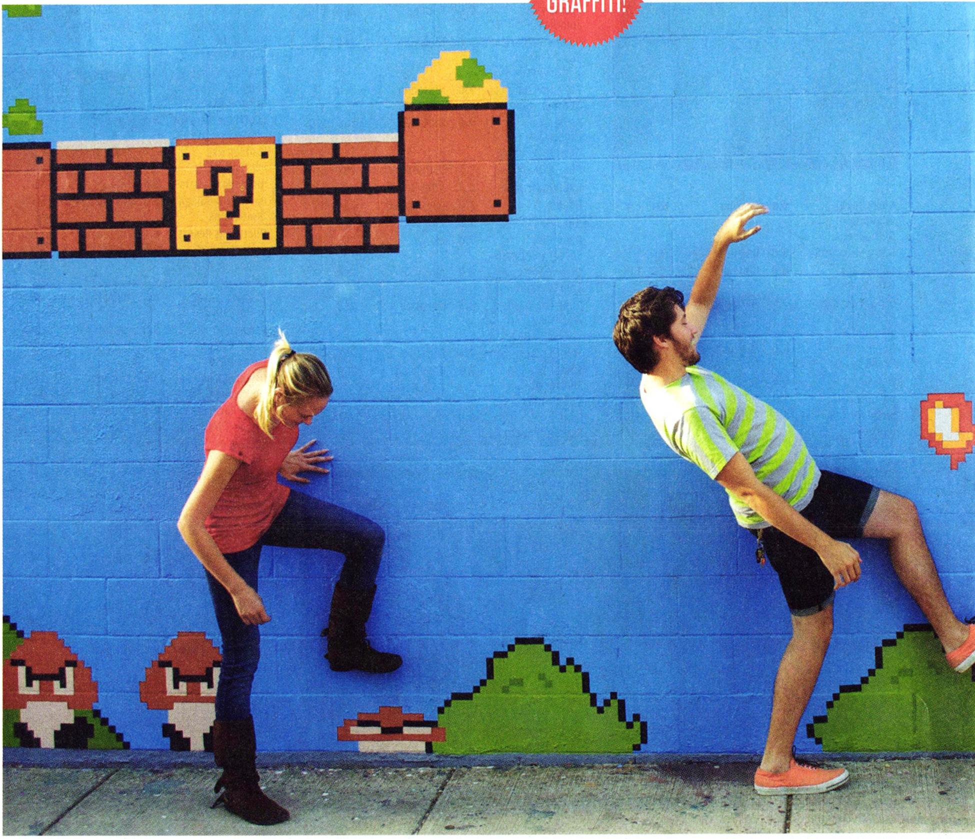
COMMUNITY

FANDOM

When Worlds Collide

A Mario mural that puts students in the game

PHYSICAL GRAFFITI!



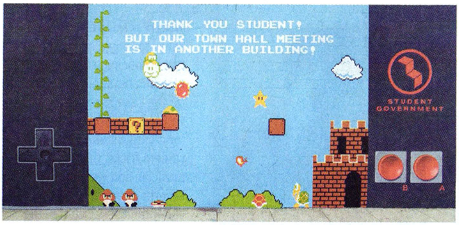
IMAGINE WALKING down the street, turning a corner, and stumbling into a life-size scene from World 1-1 in Super Mario Bros. A group of students from the Columbus College of Art and Design in Columbus, Ohio, made that possible when they created this sprawling mural to promote the student government's first town-hall meeting. Measuring 16 feet high and 38 feet wide, this interactive painting took a dozen students and eight days of work to complete.

The Super Mario Bros. scene was a perfect metaphor for campus involvement in student government, says CCAD grad Kenay Kash, 22, who designed the mural and worked on the project with his classmates.

"Ultimately, students control their college experience if they participate in the discussion, like a player controls a video game," he says. "The mural invited students to participate by posing in the landscape to complete the image. Participants could stomp a Goomba, shoot a fireball, or press buttons to 'control' their friends. I didn't consider the mural complete until participants posed in front of it."

Though it was up for only three months to promote the town-hall-meeting event, Kash says it was a fun project that drew a lot of positive student attention. **—NATHAN M.**

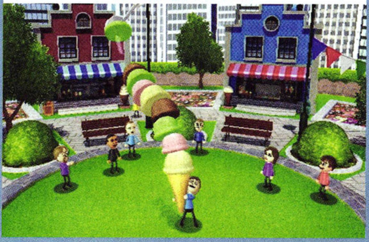
We've seen fans express their adoration for games in a lot of interesting ways, but we haven't seen many pieces that are as interactive as this one.



WRITE *your own* CAPTION

SCREEN TEST

VOLUME 269'S SHOT



"An hour later, Jerry died of brain freeze." **—BRANDON Y.**

"Everyone had laughed at him before, but only Jim was prepared when the giant flying ice cream scoops invaded." **—JESSE M.**

"No, no! The chocolate is supposed to go on top! Have them make us another!" **—[NO NAME GIVEN]**

TAKE *your best* SHOT

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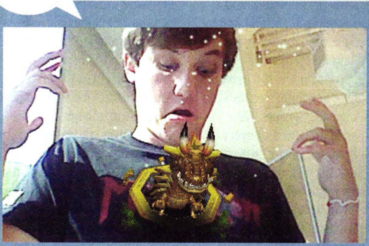
SEND YOUR PICS TO **photos@nintendopower.com**.



Use your Nintendo DSi or Nintendo 3DS system to snap a fun, gaming-related photo (like the one above) that matches this month's theme, then transfer the image to a computer using an SD card reader and e-mail it to the above address. We'll print the best ones. **THIS MONTH'S THEME: SUMMER VACATION**

READERS UNDER THE AGE OF 18 MUST GET A PARENT'S PERMISSION TO SUBMIT A PHOTO.

ABOVE *and* BEYOND

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EVENT

Theatrical as a Fox

A Star Fox 64 in-joke spirals into a full-fledged play for a group of college students.

IT MIGHT BE the year of the rabbit, but don't tell Peppy Hare that: in his world it's clearly the year of the fox—Fox McCloud, that is. Not only is Star Fox 64 getting the grand treatment with a Nintendo 3DS remake, but earlier this year a group of Hampshire College students performed *Barrel Rolls & Broken Dreams*—a play in two acts and three parts based on the N64 classic. Clocking in at nearly an hour and a half, the play was Andrew Katzman's senior-thesis project, and it took the entire school year to script, cast, rehearse, and then finally perform.

"I absolutely, 100 percent, never lost faith," recalls Katzman. "Besides, we had Peppy there, at every rehearsal, yelling, 'Never give up! Trust your instincts!' So that was a help, too."

The story largely recounts the plot of Star Fox 64. "In the early stages I kept toying with using the game as a jumping-off point into another narrative, or tying the game world in with the real world," says Katzman. "But in the end I realized the original idea was best: whatever happened, it had to [have] happened within the game world itself." The game's events are played for laughs, and it works.

Part of what makes the show so funny is, of course, its writing. But the spratan stage setup and costuming—cardboard boxes were modified to become wearable Arwings—are supplemented perfectly by Gin and Tonics, a campus a capella group that provides live re-creations of the game's sound effects and score.

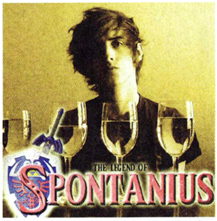
So why a stage play based on Star Fox 64? Sure, it was for a project, but Katzman credits his inspiration to an undying love for the game. He grew up playing it and continues to do so to this day. It was one day in early 2010, though, that was the catalyst. He was playing the game with his roommates and they were goofing around, dramatically reading the onscreen text. When they beat the game, they started singing along to the game's orchestral finale and joking that someone should turn the game into a play. Katzman recalls, "Down the line the inevitable 'We should do this! This would be the best play!' came up, and I guess everything kind of snowballed from there." **—DAVID W.**

As hilarious as it might be, doing a barrel roll is probably a bad idea.

FANDOM

The Legend of SpOntanius

Scope out this stunning stop-motion musical tribute to The Legend of Zelda series.



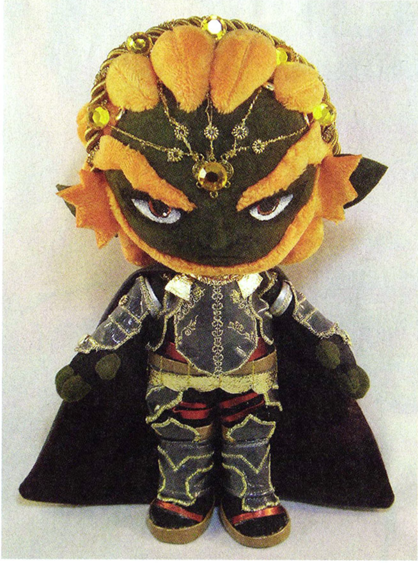
JARED JAMIESON has a knack for boggling minds and producing laughs. Blending his appreciation for the Legend of Zelda series and a fondness for creative stop-motion camera tricks, this aspiring musician and videographer is perhaps better known as "SpOntanius"—at least in the Internet realm. Jamieson, 22, of Virginia, runs a YouTube channel that showcases his music-video performances of ditties from the Zelda games in interesting and unusual ways.

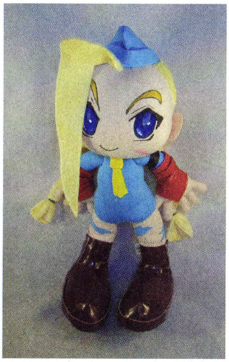
"Zelda is one of those nostalgic video game series from my childhood," explains Jamieson, who was recently inspired to replay all of the old Zelda games in order of their release dates. "It's amazing to find how well I remembered each song without hearing them in years. Listening to the music brought back memories and also opened up my eyes to how amazing the score is in these games when Nintendo had to create it on such a limited platform compared to technology these days."

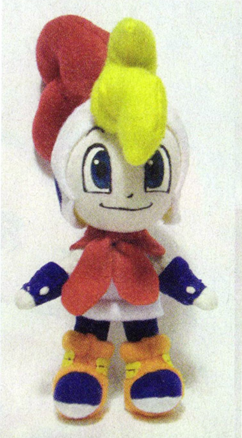
All of Jamieson's Zelda videos feature multiple filmed copies of himself performing different parts of the song. The parts are all spliced together, and each video usually includes a slew of wacky antics. While he's made several videos featuring Zelda songs performed with wine glasses, empty bottles, and toy instruments, our favorite is a rendition of the classic "Palace Theme" from Zelda II: The Adventure of Link played on a guitar.

Jamieson listened to the game music note by note to make sure his versions were completely accurate, then recorded video clips of himself playing each part of the song one note a time. "After awhile of doing this I figured if I didn't do something besides just play the song, the video would be very bland," he says. "That's when I decided to make silly faces, spin my hat around, and even change my shirt while playing the song."

The entire process for the "Palace Theme" video took about four days to shoot and edit. With three different guitar parts and one "percussion" part played by tearing paper, it took a lot of effort to edit all of the footage together into a cohesive piece. Jamieson gets a lot of suggestions from viewers, and he takes their feedback into account when considering what tunes to tackle. He's already dreaming up his next zany video project, and is considering branching out to perform songs from other classic Nintendo games. **—NATHAN M.**







Seeing some love for Billy Hatcher made us very happy. Thanks, Holly Segarra!

FANDOM

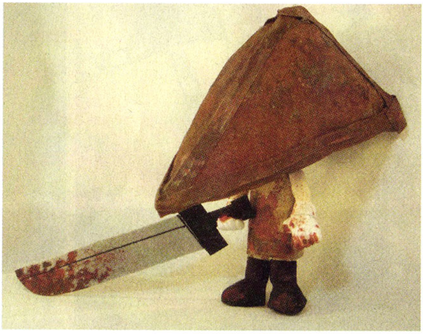
Plush Perfection

Even Ganondorf and Pyramid Head seem cute and cuddly.

IT'S ALWAYS ENCOURAGING to hear about folks honing their hobby craft and then turning it into a career, and that's exactly what happened to Holly Segarra, the creator of these impressively detailed plush dolls. She began constructing these cushy tributes to some of her favorite video game characters several years ago, initially just as a fun thing to do.

"I never really thought I would be plushing this long because it started out as a hobby," says Segarra, who began with making gifts for her boyfriend and their online pal. "A lot of people saw them and started making all sorts of requests. It kind of snowballed from there," she explains.

Now, about eight years after making her first plush, Segarra does professional toy design and prototyping and says she is currently working on undisclosed plush projects for "a few different video game companies." And on the side she moonlights as a comedian in New York City; she's talented *and* funny! These homemade takes on characters such as Cammy from Street Fighter, Ganondorf from The Legend of Zelda, and the titular star of Billy Hatcher and the Giant Egg all shine due to their colorful designs and intricate craftsmanship.

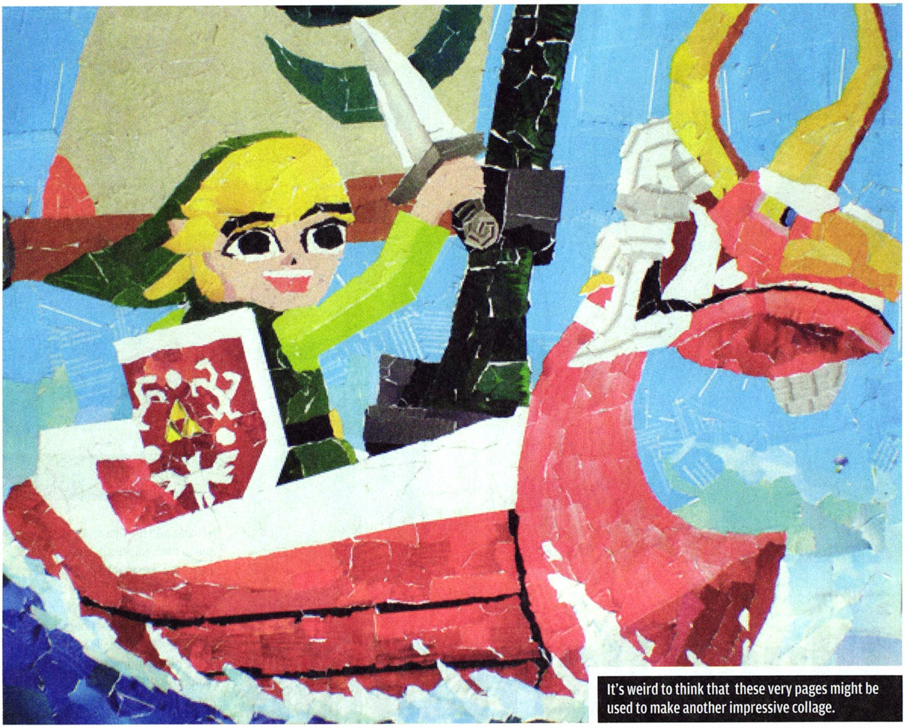


"They always start off with a sketch. Without my game plan, I could just sit there for hours like a barnacle and not really get much done. It's really important for me to figure out early on which details are going to be 'chibi-fied,'" shares Segarra, borrowing a term used by anime and manga fans to describe a cute and deformed design style.

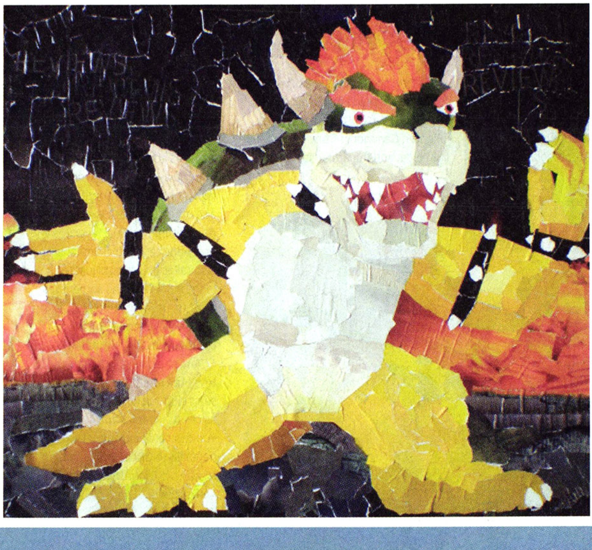
Segarra says she typically spends between two and four days on a plush project, devoting long hours to making it as perfect as possible through test runs and revisions. A typical plush toy requires about $20–40 worth of materials—everything from the fluffy innards to the outer fabrics and other little details. Beyond re-creating personal favorites and accepting requests from fans, she also takes on projects just to challenge herself. "I also sometimes want to attempt something ridiculously detailed to flex my creative muscle," she admits.

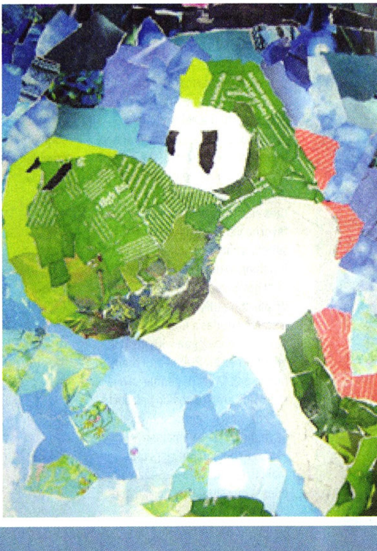
And she does more than plush toys—the multitalented Segarra sews clothing and costumes, as well as creates comics and illustrations. You can catch another glimpse of her skills in UDON Entertainment's *Mega Man Tribute* art book.

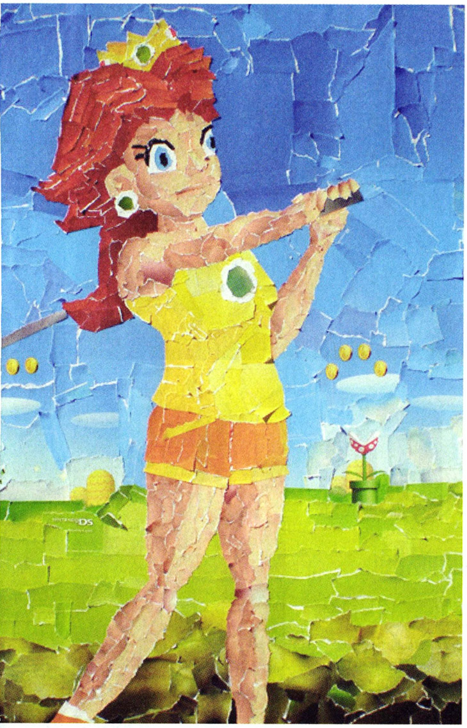
—ANDREW H.

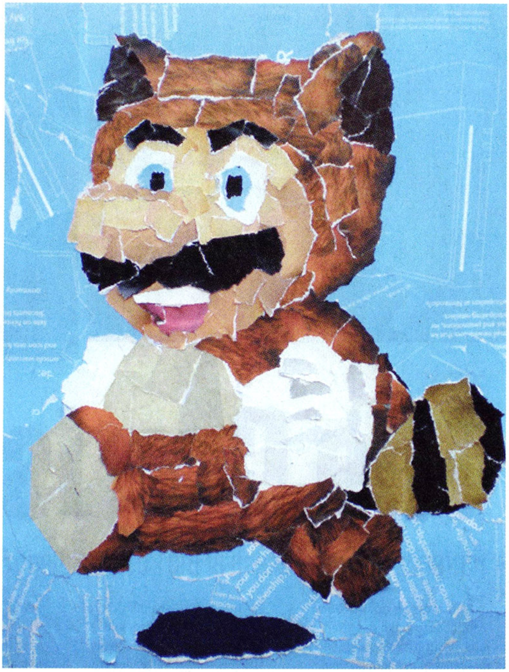


It's weird to think that these very pages might be used to make another impressive collage.

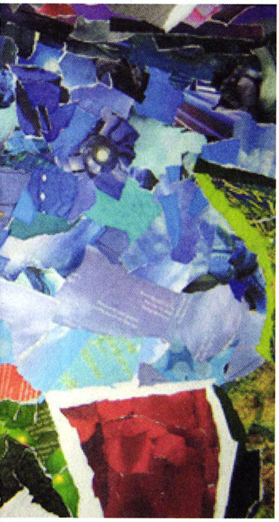








[Above] The furry textures on Mario's outfit give us an idea of what a real-life Tanooki Suit would look like. Now we wish we had a Tanooki Suit of our own!



FANDOM

Paper Power

A crafty reader puts his old Nintendo Power copies to good use!

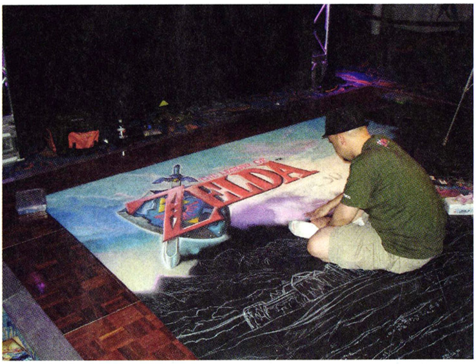
WHEN IT CAME time to clean up his apartment, Chris Lange couldn't bring himself to just throw away his old stack of Nintendo Power magazines. Instead, the 27-year-old artist from Arlington, Virginia, came up with a creative use for the magazines by turning their pages into these stunning paper collage portraits of staple Nintendo characters. That's recycling with power!

Lange started by making a collage of Yoshi, his wife's favorite Nintendo character, and eventually went on to craft popular game characters such as Mario, Princess Peach, Bowser, and Link. He's made 20 collages in all—some have been sold to collectors around the world and others have been given away to friends as gifts.

"I think using the Nintendo Power magazines for these collages is what engages the viewer, and gives the art a little more of a soul," Lange tells us. "It's awesome to look at one of the collages, and then all of a sudden, something catches your eye and you notice that you are looking at a piece of Donkey Kong or Bowser, totally out of place. Those little surprises are fun."

You can see images of the full Nintendo collage series by visiting Lange's website, www.chrisjlange.com, and checking the Galleries section. **—NATHAN M.**

Nintendo
GAMING LOUNGE
ZELDA

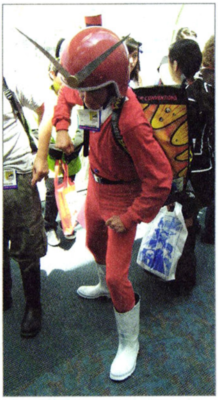


FANDOM

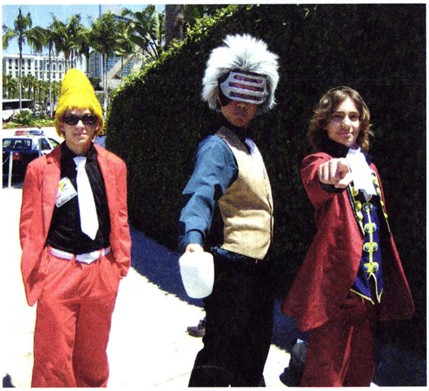
The Con Is On

Nintendo makes a splash at the 2011 San Diego Comic-Con.

THE SAN DIEGO COMIC-CON continues to get bigger every year, and, unsurprisingly, Nintendo's presence at the annual event also continues to grow by leaps and bounds. Although Nintendo's booth on the showroom floor of the San Diego Convention Center was fairly small, next door at the Marriott Marquis hotel the Big N hosted a "gaming lounge" during all four days of the convention, which ran from July 21 to July 24. The lounge—spanning more than 10,000 square feet and containing more than 80 game stations—allowed attendees to play upcoming titles such as The Legend of Zelda: Skyward Sword (Wii), Rhythm Heaven (Wii), Super Mario 3D Land (N3DS), Mario Kart 7 (N3DS), Kid Icarus: Uprising (N3DS), and Dragon Quest Monsters: Joker 2 (DS). Additionally, fans were able to witness the creation of a massive Legend of Zelda chalk mural, exchange StreetPass data with other Nintendo 3DS owners, snag free prizes (such as Zelda posters and Pokémon shirts), and more. Several third-party publishers—including Capcom, Konami, Activision, SquareEnix, and THQ—had booths at Comic-Con as well, and many showgoers arrived dressed as their favorite game characters, from Link and Princess Peach to Viewtiful Joe and Miles Edgeworth. **—CHRIS H.**



[Below] Fans dressed as Capcom characters Sissel, Godot, and young Miles Edgeworth are ready for some Comic-Con sleuthing.



SOME PHOTOS BY PRATIK SHAH AND BOB RAMIREZ.

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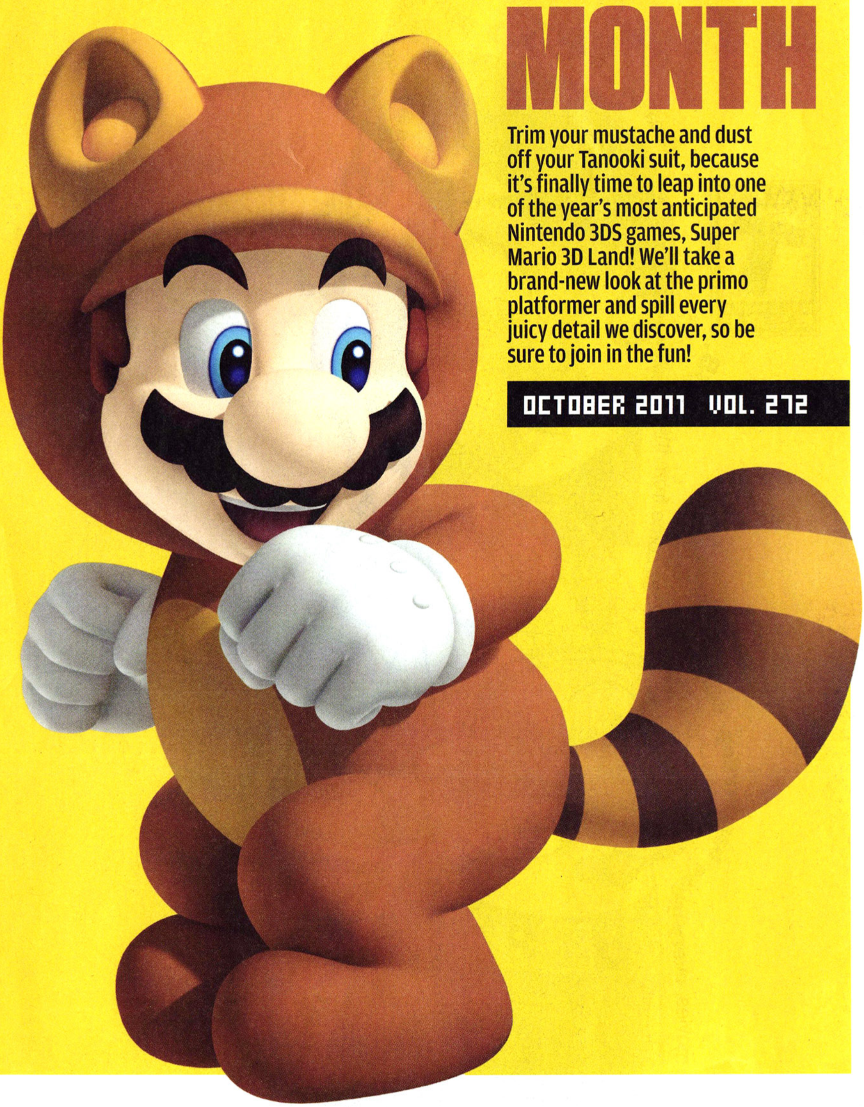
NEXT MONTH

Trim your mustache and dust off your Tanooki suit, because it's finally time to leap into one of the year's most anticipated Nintendo 3DS games, Super Mario 3D Land! We'll take a brand-new look at the primo platformer and spill every juicy detail we discover, so be sure to join in the fun!

OCTOBER 2011 VOL. 272



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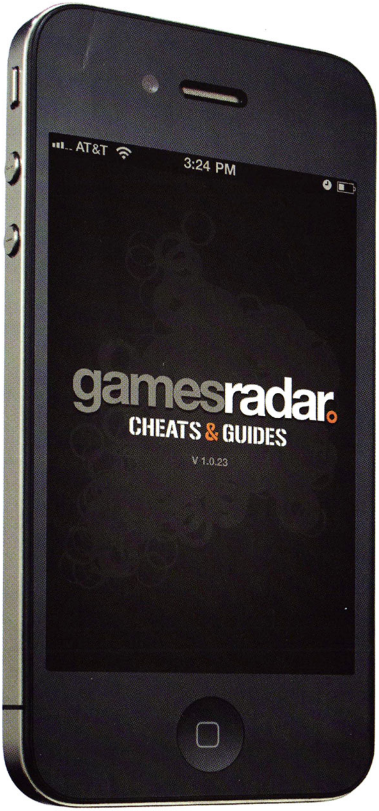

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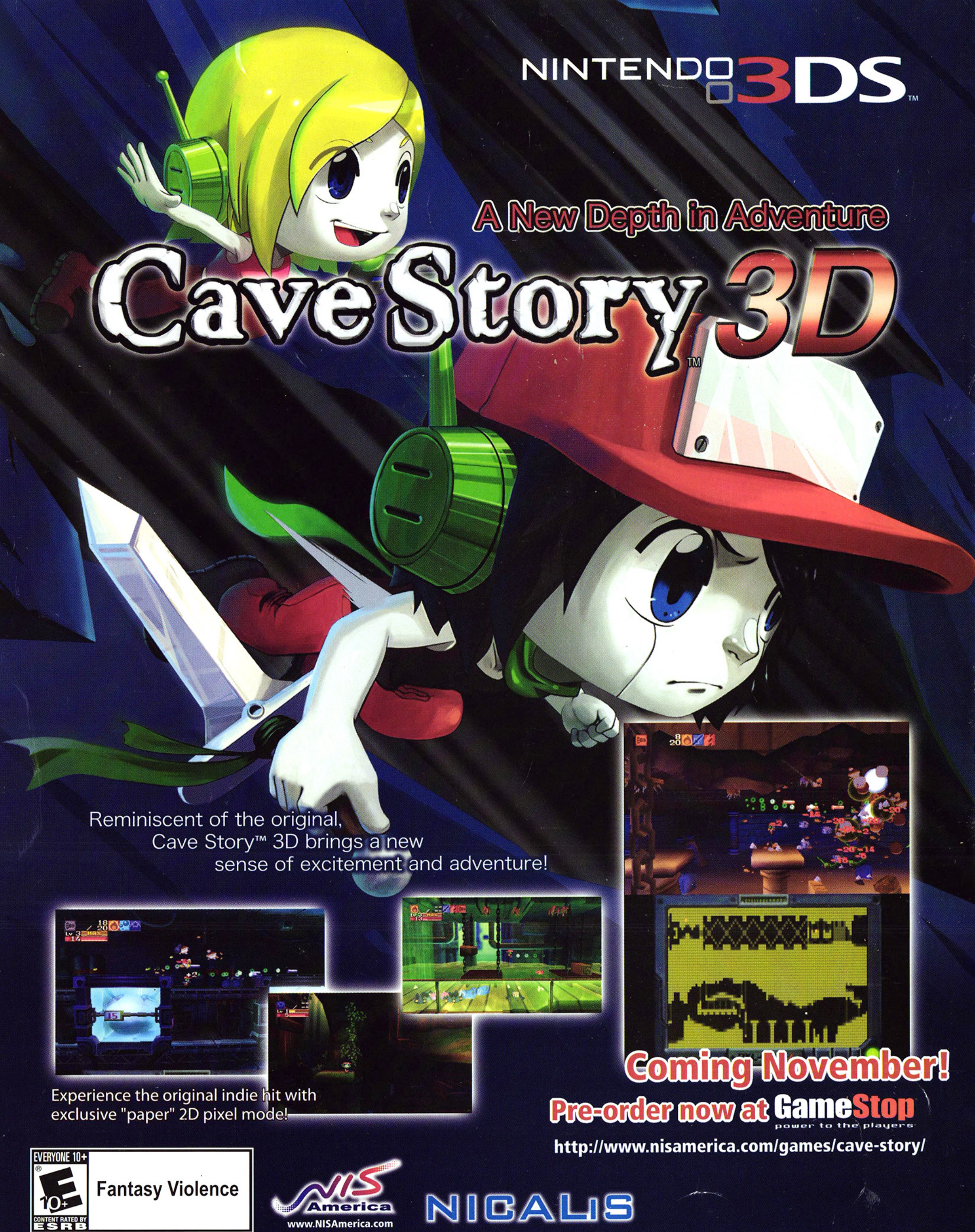

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